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# TRADE AND POLITICS ON THE GOLD COAST 1600–1720

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# TRADE AND POLITICS ON THE GOLD COAST

## 1600–1720

*A Study of the African Reaction to European Trade*

BY

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# PREFACE

THIS book is based on a thesis 'Trade and Politics on the Gold Coast, 1640–1720' which I presented to the University of London for the Ph.D. degree in June 1964.

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# ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| O.C. | Original Correspondence |
| C.O. | Colonial Office |
| *E.H.J.* | *Economisch-Historisch Jaarboek* |
| *E.H.R.* | *English Historical Review* |
| E.I.C. | East India Company |
| *G.C.R.* | *Gold Coast Review* |
| *G.N.Q.* | *Ghana Notes and Queries* |
| *J.A.H.* | *Journal of African History* |
| *J.A.S.* | *Journal of African Society* |
| *J.S.A.* | *Journal of Society of Arts* |
| *L.V.* | *Linschoten Vereeniging* |
| N.B.K.G. | Nederlandische Bezittingen ter Kust van Guinea |
| O.W.I.C. | Oude West Indische Compagnie |
| R.A.C. | The Royal African Company |
| T. | Treasury |
| *T.G.C.T.H.S.* | *Transactions of the Gold Coast and Togoland Historical Society* |
| *T.H.S.G.* | *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* |
| *T.H.S.N.* | *Transactions of the Historical Society of Nigeria* |
| *T.R.H.S.* | *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* |
| V.R.O.A. | Verslagen omtrent's Rijks Oude Archieven |
| V.W.I.S. | Verspreide West Indische Stukken |
| *W.A.R.* | *West African Review* |
| W.I.C. | (de Tweede) West Indische Compagnie. |

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# INTRODUCTION

By 1720 the Gold Coast coastline, which had had two and a half centuries of contact with Europe, had become what may be termed a Colonial fossil. Not only the Portuguese, but practically all the western European nations, had erected forts or castles in the country. From these establishments gold was carried to Brandenburg Prussia, Denmark, Holland, England, France, and Portugal. Some of its people found their way to the New World to work on the plantations.

From 1602, when de Marees wrote his description of the Gold Coast, the country became known to a wider reading public. In 1668 Olfert Dapper published his widely read book on Africa, in which the Gold Coast featured prominently. But the great increase in the literary resources came in with publications of Willem Bosman, John Barbot, John Atkins, William Smith, Thomas Phillips, Loyer, and others.[1] These early books have mainly formed the basis of the secondary works of historians like Ellis, Macdonald, Reindorf, Claridge, Ward, and Fage.[1] Except for Reindorf, Ward, and Fage, these historians made little or no use of the traditional materials that are contained in the oral history of the people. All the works, whether with or without traditional material, are not without their limitations.

De Marees's book is excellent in depicting social and commerical activities on the Gold Coast at the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth centuries. But, except for a partial translation into English by Purchas, the work has remained unavailable to writers of Gold Coast history.[2] De Marees appears to have formed the basis of such Dutch works as those of Dapper and Bosman, but even these Dutch books have not been extensively used. Ogilby's adaption of Dapper is a poor rendering. Bosman and Barbot, whose works appeared in the first half of the eighteenth century, substantiated what they had read from the available sources with their personal experiences on the Gold Coast. Bosman, backed by

[1] See Bibliography.

[2] S. Purchas, *His Pilgrims* vi. 247–353. For full translation of de Marees see K. Y. Daaku and A. van Dantzig, Frank Cass & Sons, forthcoming.

about fifteen years' stay on the coast, made much more accurate observations than Barbot, who only made a number of voyages to the Guinea coast. And yet in spite of his long residence on the coast, Bosman has his own shortcomings. Like Barbot, he was not an impartial observer. Both sought to advance the causes of their national companies and, naturally, concerned themselves mainly with events that tended to be favourable to their interests. Thus their comments on local events must always be viewed in relation to the nature of the alliances which those states had forged with the European companies. It is therefore not surprising that in 1706 Charles Hayes, an employee of the English company, accused Bosman of 'disingenuity, partiality, and malice against the English'.[1] However, his promise to write a better and an unbiased account of events was never fulfilled.

The historians of the Gold Coast have tended to accept many of the biased conclusions of the contemporary writers. The limitations in the use of such works are obvious, especially where there had been no recourse to contemporary documents to enable writers to check on the accuracy of their statements. Ellis's and Claridge's books, which have been mainly based on the travelogues and contemporary descriptions, may, at best, be described as accounts of 'European military and diplomatic relations with the Gold Coast rather than as histories of the Gold Coast and its peoples'.[2] In many respects they could have improved their work considerably if they had taken the trouble to consult even the documents of the English companies. Claridge, however, while seeking to better the work of Ellis, still depended on a few printed primary sources.

Reindorf's book is mainly intended to be a collection of the traditions of the Ga tribe, and, as such, contains some excellent materials. His attempt to write the history of other states has not been as successful as his treatment of the history of the Ga. In addition to the traditional sources, he appears to have made use of the available Danish records in Christiansborg Castle. It is true that his training as a Protestant pastor influenced some of his conclusions on some of the purely social issues, and that he often made unsubstantiated assertions, an example of which is the statement that at the early beginnings around 1600 the Asante did not know the

[1] T70/5/18, Charles Hayes to R.A.C., 1 Mar. 1706.

[2] J. D. Fage, 'Historical Research in the Gold Coast', *T.G.C.T.H.S.* 1 (1952–5), 24–9.

use of gold.[1] Reindorf's book, none the less, has much to commend it. It gives the traditional starting-point on which to build with new materials that come to light.

Ward attempted to combine the European sources with traditional history by drawing heavily on previous works. His book would have been vastly more helpful if he had made use of the documentary materials available in English. Fage's book on Ghana lays no claim to any originality, but it does achieve a historical perspective for both ancient and modern Ghana by interpreting 'what other people have discovered and have made known either in their published work, or in course of personal discussion or correspondence'.[2] Like all works that are not based on primary materials, it contains its share of mistaken assertions. All the historians except Coombs[3] have, for instance, accepted for a fact the assertion that Denkyira obtained the 'Elmina Note' from Komenda towards the end of the seventeenth century. No one knows, however, when, and if, the event took place, and why the English never paid rent to either Denkyira or Asante for their fort at Little Komenda.

The research undertaken so far on unpublished sources for the history of the Gold Coast has been mostly concerned with political developments in the nineteenth century and has been essentially based on English documents. The main exception is the work of Ivor Wilks on Akwamu, for which he consulted Danish, Dutch, English, and traditional materials.[4] He has also used Arabic documents in his reconstruction of Asante history.[5] The main limitation to Wilks's excellent work on Akwamu is in the use of the European records. As he pointed out in his preface, he used the Furley Collections of documents now deposited at the Balme Library of the University of Ghana. Although these sources have been used, their claim to be original documents is limited by the fact that they are Furley's transcriptions and translations of papers relevant to the history of the Gold Coast. Allowing for inaccuracies in the translation and the difficulties which the researchers encounter on account of the frequent interposition of Dutch, Danish, and Portuguese words in his translations, the collections are a mine of valuable historical

[1] C. C. Reindorf, *The History of the Gold Coast and Asante*, p. 50.
[2] Fage, *Ghana, A Historical Interpretation* (Madison, 1961), p. xi.
[3] D. Coombs, *The Gold Coast, Britain and the Netherlands 1850–1874* (London, 1963), p. 11.
[4] I. Wilks, 'Akwamu, 1650–1750' (M.A. thesis, Cardiff, 1958).
[5] Wilks, *The Northern Factor in Ashanti History* (Legon, 1961).

original information. But unless the materials are checked from the sources their accuracy must be accepted with caution.

Apart from Wilks, others have used the records of the Dutch and English trading companies. On the English side, K. G. Davies[1] has used the records of the Royal African Company to write the history of the English trading company, but not the history of the Gold Coast. His book may be used as a guide to the documents relevant to the history of the country rather than as a contribution to the history of the Gold Coast. Similarly, Cousins[2] has utilized the documents of the first West India Company in tracing the company's fortunes in West Africa in general. For purely African history Ratelband's publication[3] of *Five Day Registers of Elmina Castle* between 1645 and 1647 is very helpful. His aim here too was not to write the history of the Gold Coast or even of Elmina, but to edit and preserve for future historians some of the records of the company that have long been neglected. To Dutch historians as a whole the history of the Dutch East India Company is more interesting than that of the West India Company, which dealt in slaves. Even those who attempt to write on the West India Company tend to be more interested in its activities in the New World than on the coast of Guinea. Menkman,[4] for instance, summarily dismissed the whole West Coast of Africa in three pages!

On purely Gold Coast history, nothing has been written in any detail about how the Africans organized their trade. Discussions about political, social, and economic effects which the transatlantic trade had on the country has been confined to a few, often ill-supported, generalizations. It is with a view to filling the gap in historical knowledge especially in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries that this work has been undertaken. In this work I have used the name Gold Coast instead of the modern name Ghana, for purely historical reasons. This is because the name Gold Coast is more appropriate to the area of action than is the modern one.

For materials in writing this book, I have depended mainly on the records of the Dutch and the English trading companies that were established on the Gold Coast. Occasionally I have made use of Danish materials obtained from the Furley Collections, as well

[1] K. G. Davies, *The Royal African Company* (London, 1958).

[2] A. Cousins, 'The Dutch West India Company on the West Coast up to 1660' (M.A. thesis, Belfast, 1953).

[3] K. Ratelband, *São Jorge da Mina 1645–1647* (The Hague, 1953).

[4] W. R. Menkman, *De West Indische Compagnie* (Amsterdam, 1947).

as my own field notes which I collected in Adansi and Assin between 1965 and 1967.

The records of the Dutch West India companies are deposited at the Algemeen Rijksarchief in The Hague. These consist of three main groups, namely, those of the Old West India Company (1621–74), the Second West India Company (1674–1791), and the Dutch settlements on the coasts of Guinea. The last group is mainly a duplication of the records of the two companies. But this group contains very valuable documents that date back to 1624 and others as late as 1816.[1]

Of the documents of the first company not much remains. Lack of interest in the company's activities combined with ill fate has led to the destruction of many of them. In 1821, for instance, about a thousand of the company's records were sold to the paper mills. Twenty-three years later a fire which broke out in the Department of the Marine destroyed many of the remaining documents.[2] But the extant ones are very helpful in throwing light on the history of the Gold Coast in the first half of the seventeenth century. The most important are the Day Registers, or Journals, of the Director-General and his Council on the Gold Coast. In addition to the day-to-day accounts of events at the headquarters and the outposts, they contain contracts signed between the Dutch and the local rulers.

Of the documents of the Second West India Company, the ones most directly relevant to the history of the Gold Coast are the Castle Journals, which are similar to the Day Journals of the Old West India Company. The third group of documents contains, in addition to duplications of the first two, records that, probably inadvertently, had remained unclassified. Occasionally important documents turn up among those which are described as miscellaneous. These provide some missing links between the two main groups. There is also a valuable collection of old maps and charts to be found in the Leupen Collections at The Hague.

Unlike those of the Dutch, most of the early English companies' records are missing. The main extant documents on the seventeenth century are grouped under the T70 series in the Treasury records. But the early records of the Company of Royal Adventurers are ill kept and scrappy. They mainly throw light on Anglo-Dutch rivalries on the Gold Coast at the time immediately before and after the

[1] P. Carsons, *Materials for West African History in . . . Belgium and Holland* (London, 1962).

[2] Ratelband, op. cit., p. xxv.

second Anglo-Dutch War, 1664–6. There are also a few good documents on the Gold Coast in the records of the English East India Company between 1658 and 1664. The documents are deposited in the India Office Library in London. I have, however, used transcripts available in the Furley Collections at the Balme Library of the University of Ghana, Legon.

The records of the Royal African Company, though not as informative as those of the Dutch, are helpful in understanding the social and economic history of the Gold Coast between 1670 and 1720. The most important of these are the letters from the Gold Coast to the company in London as well as the account books and warehouse journals of Cape Coast Castle, which was the headquarters of the English. But on the whole, whereas the Dutch records contain fuller and more detailed accounts of local events, the English documents are mainly abstracts of letters. Their usefulness, therefore, is very marginal. But the Dutch and English documents together throw very useful light on the seventeenth-century history of the Gold Coast.

Another group of documents in the Public Record Office from which occasional information may be obtained is the Colonial Office series. The C.O. 1. series deals with Africa and the New World. Its papers are also, in some respects, duplicates of the few extant records of the Company of Royal Adventurers. These are, however, not properly indexed, and their use as source of purely African history is rather limited.

I have also depended on modern legal and anthropological studies of the Gold Coast in so far as they help throw light on the comments and observations of the contemporary writers. Busia's and Rattray's works on Ashanti, Meyerowitz's studies of the Akan, as well as Ollenu and Mensah Sarbah's books on customary practices, have also been extensively consulted.[1]

The main objective in using these sources is to bring the events of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries into proper historical perspective. Without a proper understanding of the history of the Gold Coast at this period, one cannot fully appreciate the social, economic, and political changes that took place in the subsequent centuries. Some of the events that gradually shaped the history of the Gold Coast until it eventually emerged into the modern nation state of Ghana have their beginnings in the seventeenth century.

[1] See Bibliography.

# CHAPTER I

# The Gold Coast at the Beginning of the Seventeenth Century

Two streams stemming from different sources and flowing in different directions have greatly influenced the history of the Gold Coast. From across the Atlantic seaboard came the influence of Europe. This was the outcome of the systematic exploration of the Atlantic coast of Africa by the Portuguese. From the north, the rise and decline of the Sudanese empires on the Niger Bend affected the Gold Coast. Both movements set in motion commercial ripplings that eventually had political and social repercussions. The history of the Gold Coast up to 1720, therefore, cannot be isolated from these two movements.

The Gold Coast in the seventeenth century may be defined as that stretch of coastline from Assini in the west to the River Volta in the east. It extended northwards to an indeterminate boundary in the region of Gonja and Bono-Mansu. Most of the area is thickly wooded rain-forest which gradually thins northwards and south-eastwards into scrubland savannah. The south-western belt has over eighty-two inches of rainfall annually, but around Accra to the east the rainfall is only about twenty-five inches. From Accra westwards the coastline is characterized by a series of tertiary rocks, which jut into the sea to form promontories.

The area is inhabited principally by two groups of peoples, who, although both negro, trace their origins from two different directions. The Akan, who are in many ways the most interesting of the peoples of the Gold Coast, are found mostly in the forest zone. They occupy the area between the Black Volta and the Guinea coast. On the eastern coastline, and a few miles inland, are the Ga-Adangbe. Both groups had long established themselves on the Gold Coast before the arrival of the Portuguese in the fifteenth century. Intermingled with the Akan and the Ga-Adangbe are the Guan, who are considered to be autochthonous to the country. The Guan are mostly found around Winneba on the coast, the

Akwapim hills, and along the Volta gorge to as far north as Kete-Krakye and Salaga.

The Akan have a number of identical cultural traits and institutions, the most striking of which is linguistic. All the Akan groups speak the Twi language or dialects that are mutually intelligible. The language, like that of the Ga, belongs to the Kwa sub-family of the Niger–Congo family, among which such languages as Ewe, Yoruba, and Edo are included.[1] Some common distinguishing features of the Akan are their religion, calendar, marriage customs, matrilineal system of inheritance, and the monarchical system of government. Their society is also organized on exogamous matrilineal and patrilineal clan lines.[2]

An interesting and intriguing aspect of the history of the Akan is the question of their origin. Many attempts have been made to trace their origins to places far beyond their present habitat. It is generally accepted that the Akan are not the original inhabitants of the forest zone. The traditions of origin of various groups of the Akan agree that they emigrated from a place north of the forest zone, but the exact location of the 'north' has not been firmly established. One school propounds a direct Akan descent[3] from the old Sudanese empire of Ghana. Another school considers the relationship between the Akan and the kingdoms of western Sudan to have consisted mainly of cultural[4] exchanges that resulted from trade between the forest and the savannah zones. A third and much more recent school traces the origins of the Akan from the Chad-Benue regions through the Dahomey gap to the basins of the Pra and Offin rivers.[5] Although all these are interesting and fascinating,

[1] D. Westermann and A. Bryan, *The Languages of West Africa* (London, 1952), pp. 76–94; J. H. Greenberg, *Studies in African Linguistics Classification* (New Haven, 1955), p. 6; *Languages of Africa* (The Hague, 1963), p. 6.

[2] A. A. Boahen, 'The Origins of the Akan', *G.N.Q.* 9 (1966), 3–10.

[3] W. T. Balmer, *A History of the Akan Peoples* (London, Cape Coast, 1925), p. 27. Balmer cautiously asserts 'it is very probable that the Fanti, Ashanti, Ahanta and the Akan people in general formed originally part of this [Ghana] ancient negro kingdom dwelling in districts more remote from the central city of Government'. This is the earliest reference to the Akan origins from Ghana in the twentieth century. J. B. Danquah, 'The Akan Claim to Origin from Ghana', *W.A.R.* 26 (1955), 968–97, 1107–11; E. Meyerowitz, *Akan Traditions of Origin* (London, 1952), pp. 23–5; W. E. F. Ward, *History of Ghana* (Leicester, 1959), p. 49.

[4] R. Mauny, *Africa* 24 (1954), 208–11; Fage, *Introduction to the History of West Africa* (Cambridge, 1956), p. 95; 'Ancient Ghana: A Review of Evidence', *T.H.S.G.* 3 (1957), 92–6.

[5] Boahen, op. cit., p. 10.

in the absence of sufficient archaeological discoveries it will be premature to write about the origins of the Akan in any greater detail. What is certain is that, however near or distant the 'north' of the Akan might have been, their commercial relations with the Sudanese empires had important influences on them and on the Gold Coast in general.

The Akan were drawn into the main stream of developments in the Niger Bend because the Offin and Pra basins where they concentrated in large numbers were rich in gold. It may be remembered that the fame and prosperity of the Sudanese empires depended, among other things, on their wealth in gold. This gold was reputed to have come from the Wangara country. The term Wangara probably referred to the area of the mines of Bambuk and Boure on the upper reaches of the Senegal. At the same time, however, gold from the Gold Coast was being sent northwards to these empires. The search for gold and other forest produce drew the states to the south into commerical, cultural, and political contact with western Sudan. During the period of the Akan trade with the north two important market-towns came into being. To the north-east and the north-west were established two of the most important southern termini of the trade routes. One was the Gonja market of Kafaba on the Volta, south of Salaga,[1] and Salaga, which succeeded it after the seventeenth century. The other was the Mande market at Beeo (Begho).

In Gonja was the southernmost market frequented by the Hausa traders from the north-east; here Kano cloths and imported goods from across the Sahara were exchanged for kola nuts. From the early part of the fifteenth century, at least, Hausa traders were known to have been coming to Gonja for the nuts, which were used as stimulants in the dry and hot areas.[2] The red kola (*Cola nitida*), which was found in the region of modern Asante, was valuable to the traders because of its long-lasting qualities. It was carried to places as far north as Tripoli on the Mediterranean coast. In the Gold Coast, then, the immediate hinterland of the forest was controlled by the Mande and the Hausa traders with whom the

[1] Jack Goody, 'The Mande and the Akan Hinterland', *The Historian in Tropical Africa*, ed. Vansina, Mauny, and Thomas (London, 1964), pp. 202–3.

[2] E. W. Bovill, *The Golden Trade of the Moors* (London, 1958), p. 240; Boahen, *Britain, The Sahara, and the Western Sudan* (Oxford, 1964), pp. 126–7. Fage, *West Africa*, pp. 38–9; *Ghana*, p. 20; H. R. Palmer, *Sudanese Memoirs* iii (Lagos, 1928), 92–107, 132.

Akan carried on extensive trade in gold and kola nuts. Later on when the direction of, and emphasis on, trade changed with the arrival of many Europeans on the coast, the Akan were able to put their previous experience to good use.

The eastern coast towards the Volta is the home of the Ga-Adangbe people. Like the Ewe to the east of them, the Ga-Adangbe are said to have emigrated from Noatsi (Nuadje), which is about fifty miles north of Lome, and even further beyond, from Yurobaland. One group, the Adangbe, may have come by land, but Ga traditions suggest a migration by both land and sea.[1]

The Akan and Adangbe migrations came from different directions into a comparatively sparsely populated region, where they gradually established themselves over the autochthonous people. Ga and Fante traditions assert that Guan-speaking peoples, such as the Asebu (Sabu) Fetu and the Etsi (Ati), lived on the coast before their arrival.[2] The successive waves of migrants into the country from the north and the east drew the Gold Coast into contact with the political and commercial development of western Sudan.

Politically, the influence which came from the north was far-reaching. The rise and fall of empires in western Sudan kept pushing peoples southwards nearer and into the forest zone. This led to the formation of new states, of which the most important in the Gold Coast were the Bona, Banda, and Gonja states. In the open grassland country mobility allowed the formation of bigger states, but in the forest the situation was different. Until the European era the Akan in the forest lived in a group of small chiefdoms, which were organized on kinship lines. Although these states were widely scattered throughout the forest zone, the Akan had easily identifiable characteristics in their social organization. Each state was an association of loosely united family groups that traced descent to a common ancestry. The basis of society was the family, which was under the direct rule of the family head. Within each town was a chief, who was usually a head of one of the families. Even when the chief's power was raised from the position of a family head to one with jurisdiction over the town, he was only the first among equals and not a master. The internal affairs of each family fell first under the jurisdiction of the family head. The chief's main duty then was

[1] Reindorf, op. cit., p. 19.

[2] Fage, *Ghana*, pp. 23–4; Ward, op. cit., p. 57; Meyerowitz, *Akan Traditions*, pp. 63–9; Ward, op. cit., p. 39; Fage, op. cit., p. 25.

to provide a workable and harmonious relationship between the chief and the families that composed the town. In many respects the relationship between the chief and the family heads was the same as that between the head of the state and the chiefs of the individual towns.

It is true that there were state boundaries, but the social organization led to wide mobility of people from one state to another. This was because clan membership, affiliation, and loyalties completely transcended tribal and political boundaries, and anybody who moved from his own tribe to another was readily welcomed into the family of the members of his clan, and for all practical purposes, was accepted as a member of that family.[1] Although there were wars, skirmishes, and disputes over boundaries, the most significant feature was that inter-tribal and inter-state wars were readily submitted to arbitration. There were also frequent consultations of common oracles and national gods. This situation could prevail for a long time because, despite long commercial association with the north, the social fabric had not been adversely affected by economic considerations. Indeed it may be said that wars of outright territorial aggrandisement were unknown.

The most significant feature of the Afro-European confrontation on the Guinea coast was the modification of the basis on which society rested. The presence of many Europeans on the coast with different trading goods greatly affected social and political organization on the Gold Coast. In the second half of the seventeenth century gun-running, which followed the arrival of the rival trading nations, shook the foundations of society. The proliferation of firearms made possible the forcible incorporation of weaker states into more powerful ones. The latter half of the seventeenth century, therefore, witnessed the formation of sizeable empires in the hinterland of the coast. Territorial expansion by force of arms became the means to gain economic power in the new order, as was shown first by Denkyira and then by Akwamu and Asante.

European contact not only increased the volume of trade but diversified it. The pre-existing northern trade with the coast was based on salt, which was carried to places far in the interior, where it was in short supply.[2] On the Gold Coast the only non-coastal source of salt was at Daboya, in the Gonja district, but the whole of

[1] Boahen, 'Origins of the Akan', op. cit., p. 5.
[2] O. Dapper, *Afrikaensche Gewesten* (Amsterdam, 1668), p. 93.

the forest region of the Gold Coast obtained its supply of salt from the coast. Although it is not certain how far north salt was carried, it is likely that the Akan traders carried it to the southern termini of the Sudanese trade, especially to Begho. In this fortified town Akan traders bought cotton cloths and other articles,[1] which were likely to have been paid for in salt as well as in gold and kola nuts.

On the arrival of the Europeans the long association between the Gold Coast and the north had created favourable conditions that could readily be exploited by the Europeans. One of the most important items of trade between the Gold Coast and its neighbours was cotton cloth. The long-established trade in cotton between the Gold Coast and its neighbours had created a ready demand which the Portuguese attempted to satisfy. They not only brought the well-known cloth from North Africa but acted as carriers in the local West African trade. Cloths, leopard skins, and beads were obtained from Benin and carried to the Gold Coast.[2] Later on cloth from Whydah was also imported into the Gold Coast. And although Pacheco summarily dismissed the Ivory Coast as 'treacherous . . . and of no trade', the Portuguese later frequented it and bought cloth to be resold on the Gold Coast. By the beginning of the seventeenth century opinion about this coast had changed, and it was found to be inhabited by peoples who were 'experienced in making cotton cloths which . . . sell on the Gold Coast'.[3] European attempts to oust African middlemen from this trade caused frequent frictions in the seventeenth century. It was not only on the Gold Coast that the Ivory Coast cloth, or the Quaqua cloth, found a ready market; some was bought by Mande traders and carried to the northern markets.[4]

Despite competition from the Atlantic, trade between the north and the forest zone continued for a long time. A Dutch cartographer in 1629 was well aware of the trade in cloth between the Akan and the interior. According to him the most famous places for the cloth

[1] Leupen Collection, Map 743, Appendix 1.

[2] J. W. Blake, *European Beginnings in West Africa*, p. 93; Fage, *Ghana*, p. 42; 'Bead Trade', *J.A.H.* 3. ii. 345; Wilks, 'Medieval Trade Routes . . . ', *J.A.H.* 3. ii. 337.

[3] P. de Marees, *Beschrivinge en Historischie. . . . Gout Koninckrijck van Guinea 1602*, ed. Naber (The Hague, 1915), p. 15. De Marees asserts that 'dit volck zijn mede seer cloec in cottoenen cleeden te maken, ende die op de Gout Custe te Vercopen, sij handelen veel met die van de Mina'.

[4] J. Barbot, 'A Description of the Coasts of North and South Guinea', Churchill, *Collections of Voyages and Travels* v. 433.

trade were Wankyi, Incassa, and Insoko.[1] At the turn of the century Loyer was to be told of the great market of Insoko, from whence Turkish carpets, fine cotton cloths, striped red and blue silk, and other articles were brought to Assini.[2] There is reason to believe that in the course of time some of the West African cloths found their way to Europe and to the New World; in 1686, for instance, there was a complaint from Barbados that some Ardra cloths that had been taken from the *Prosperous* and the *Orange Tree* were short of several pieces.[3] It is likely that the cloths were meant for the many slaves from the Guinea coast in the New World.

Beads were another important article of trade that the Europeans brought to the Gold Coast from other West African countries. The Portuguese brought in beads known as 'Coris' from Benin. These were described in 1601 as being made of blue, green, and black stones obtained from the River Forcades; and later on places like the Cameroons and Whydah became associated with the manufacture of these beads. On the Gold Coast itself a bead industry developed that put finishing touches to the imported beads and gave them local character.[4] In the course of time the local markets were swamped with cheap manufactured goods, and these eventually submerged locally manufactured goods. However, it was the great demand for slaves which greatly affected the pre-existing inter-state commerce.

Behind the Portuguese exploration of the Atlantic seaboard that opened new vistas of trade for Europe and West Africa were many motives. Among these were a desire to outflank the Arabs in the gold trade, a proselytizing zeal, and a crusading urge to seek an alliance with the mythical Prester John.[5] But which of these took precedence over the other is a matter for debate. For the history of West Africa in general, and for that of the Gold Coast in particular, the desire for Guinea gold and the discovery of the metal at Mina in 1471 were the factors of greatest historical moment.

[1] Leupen Collection, Map 743, Appendix 1.

[2] Loyer, 'Abstract of Voyage to Issini', in Astley, *Collections* ii. 429.

[3] T70/1433/7, From Barbados to R.A.C., 14 Aug. 1686.

[4] De Marees, op. cit., p. 55. He asserts that 'de bevissen of Coralen die doen sij oock veel copen, ende laten die door hun slaven ende Negroes breecken ende slijpen, ende die ghebruycken sij om hunne victualie te coopen . . .'.

[5] Blake, *European Beginnings in West Africa*, pp. 4–5; Azurara, 'The Chronicle and Conquest of Guinea', ed. G. H. Kimble, *Hakluyt Society* i. 28; C. R. Boxer, *Four Centuries of Portuguese Expansion 1415–1825* (Johannesburg, 1961), pp. 5–8; Fage, *Introduction to the History of West Africa*, pp. 46–7.

The importance attached to Mina may be seen from the developments that immediately followed its discovery. The exploration, which had hitherto owed much to government initiative and support as was traditionally personified in the activities of Prince Henry the Navigator, had been allowed to languish for nearly a decade. After the discovery of Mina, however, it once more attracted the attention of the Portuguese Crown. This is seen from the fact that the contract of Fernão Gomes, to whom the enterprise had been farmed out, was not renewed in 1474; but instead the Guinea trade became a royal monopoly, under the charge of Dom João. Eight years later Dom João, now king, caused a castle to be built at Mina which was to protect the gold trade from interlopers and hostile Africans and to ensure that the Crown was not cheated out of it.[1] To give a legal stamp to the Crown's monopoly, the title 'Lord of Guinea' was added to the Portuguese royal titles, and Mina was raised to city status. Although the discovery of the East Indies tended to draw the emphasis away from Guinea to the spices of India, the east never completely overshadowed the importance of Guinea.

Until 1642, when the Dutch succeeded in despoiling Portugal of the Guinea section of its thalassocracy,[2] the only permanent European establishments on the Gold Coast were the Portuguese forts at Elmina, Shama, and Axim; the Dutch, however, did not succeed in maintaining a commercial monopoly for nearly so long a period. From 1530 other European nations had begun to interest themselves in the gold and ivory trade, although the Portuguese interest remained predominant until at least the end of the sixteenth century. At the height of the trade in the early sixteenth century it was estimated that the annual output of gold was about 24,000 ounces or £100,000, which equalled about a tenth of the total world supply.[3] It is no wonder therefore that in 1552 João de Barros wrote that 'as far as the increase of the royal patrimony is concerned I do not know in Portugal of any land-tax, toll, tithe, transfer-tax or any

[1] Blake, op. cit., p. 41; Fage, op. cit., p. 49; Boxer, op. cit., p. 25.

[2] Boxer, *Race Relations in the Portuguese Colonial Empire 1415–1825* (Oxford, 1963), p. 2; C. P. Lucas, *Historical Geography of the British Colonies*, vol. iii, *West Africa* (Oxford, 1900), p. 45. The Accra post was burnt down by the townsmen in 1576, see Fage, 'A New Check List of the Forts and Castles of Ghana', *T.H.S.G.* 4. i. 64.

[3] D. Pereira, *Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis*, ed. G. H. Kimble, Hakluyt Society (1936), p. 120; Blake, *Europeans in West Africa* i. 92–3; *European Beginnings in West Africa*, pp. 83–4; Fage, *Ghana*, pp. 41–3, 100.

corn tax more certain or one which yields more regular annual revenue with no tenant alleging drought or loss, than what is yielded by the trade of Guinea'.[1] Although the source of the gold was never revealed to the Portuguese, there is no doubt that the gold supply from Guinea was an important asset to their economy in the sixteenth century.

The first European power to challenge Portugal's claim to Guinea was France. In 1542 a French ship that visited Cape Three Points carried back to France 1,000 ounces of gold. And although French activities were mainly confined to upper Guinea, the Portuguese were forced to establish a system of patrolling on the Mina coast to check intrusions into their preserve.[2] But however much the French wished to challenge Portuguese claims, their internal political troubles in the sixteenth century tied their hands. Their activities on the Mina coast, therefore, eventually died out, only to be followed by those of the English.

Direct English connections with the Gold Coast go back to 1554. In that year three English ships, the *Primrose*, the *Lion*, and the *Moon*, were fitted out by some London merchants to trade at Mina and Benin. Following upon this came William Towerson, who traded on some parts of the Mina coast, including Shama. He described the people there as using the 'bark of certain trees' for their 'clothes, cordles, girdles and fishing lines'.[3] Not only individual merchants, but the court also took an interest in the Guinea trade, and Queen Elizabeth I, for example, was said to have helped in the financing of an expedition to Guinea by providing a ship and money.[4] But apart from this evidence, direct court encouragement of, and participation in, the Guinea trade was to await the time of the later Stuarts.

English activities up to 1618 were unorganized. They were of a rather hit-and-run kind in which people depended more on luck than on any consistency of purpose. The reign of James I saw a significant attempt to organize their trade to Guinea. This is seen in the formation of the Company of Adventurers of London trading to parts of Africa. This company confined its activities principally to upper

[1] João de Barros, quoted by Boxer, *Four Centuries . . .*, pp. 26–7.

[2] Blake, *European Beginnings in West Africa*, p. 3.

[3] W. Towerson, *First Voyage to Guinea*, ed. J. W. Blake, Hakluyt Society, 2nd series, lxxvii. 379.

[4] J. F. Zook, *The Company of Royal Adventurers Trading into Africa* (Washington, 1919), p. 4.

Guinea and thus failed to exploit the sources of the gold supply. This neglect was remedied in 1631 when another company was formed to encourage the 'Guinean merchants to take a hand in the gold trade of the Gold Coast', which was being monopolized by the Dutch.[1] The Adventurers were granted a monopoly of the trade for the lands between Cape Blanco and the Cape of Good Hope for thirty years.

The arguments used against the 1618 company, with regard to the failure to prosecute the gold trade, were also brought up against the 1631 company. A petition submitted to Whitehall in 1649 accused the company of failing to discover the sources of the Guinea gold. It held that they had waited in their fort at Kormantse for the 'moorish traders to bring down the gold'.[2] The Company of Royal Adventurers, which was incorporated in the 1660s and which was given a monopoly of the trade for one thousand years, was ruined by the Anglo-Dutch war of 1664–5, and was succeeded in 1672 by the much larger and better-organized Royal African Company.

However, before the seventeenth century was out the monopoly of the Royal African Company had been successfully challenged by other English traders, and in 1698 the trade was opened to all Englishmen. Individual traders wishing to take a part in the Guinea trade were to pay a duty of 10 per cent on exports, which was to assist the company in paying for the maintenance charges of the forts. In 1712, when the Ten Per Cent Act expired, the trade was thrown open to all without restriction.[3] The weary groping of the English to put their West African trade on a better footing, and the failure that dogged the steps of their companies, may partly be accounted for by the activities of the Dutch.

The Dutch arrived later on the Gold Coast scene than either the French or the English, but they were better organized and equipped for the trade than any of their predecessors. It was their persistence that finally ejected the Portuguese from the Gold Coast in 1642. Dutch connections with the Guinea coast go back to the last decade of the sixteenth century, when Bernard Erecksz popularized the Guinea trade in the United Provinces. While a prisoner on the Portuguese island of São Thomé, he learnt of the lucrative trade in

[1] Blake, 'Farm of the Guinea Trade', *Essays in British and Irish History* (London, 1949), p. 89.

[2] C.O. 1/11/13, *Remonstrance . . . to the Hon. Council of State*, Dec. 1649.

[3] Zook, op. cit., p. 111; Davies, *The Royal African Company*, pp. 44, 46.

gold and ivory which the Portuguese conducted with the Gold Coast, and when he returned in 1593 he not only passed on the news to his countrymen, but fitted out expeditions to Guinea.[1]

Erecksz's example was quickly followed by his countrymen, who were encouraged officially to take a hand in the Guinea trade; and to this end the states of Holland and Zeeland provided incentives for the trade by exempting ships that took part in it from certain duties. But as interest in the trade grew, so did the hazards and dangers that were encountered from the Portuguese. It was with a view to lessening these dangers that in 1597 two companies were founded in Middleburg by Balthazar de Moucheron and the Burgomaster. Interest in the trade was further kindled by the publication of the works of Jan Huyghen van Linschoten between 1597 and 1598. In 1600 a company to trade in Guinea was founded in Amsterdam; and after these developments people began to appeal to the States-General to provide protection for those who went to the Guinea coast.[2]

The importance of the Guinea trade to the economy of the United Provinces may be seen from the volume of trade passing between them and West Africa. Fifteen years after the first Dutch expedition to the Guinea coast there was a yearly average of twenty ships engaged in the trade which carried about 200,000 yards of linen, 40,000 pounds of copper basins, kettles, and other hardware, and 100,000 pounds of beads, as well as blankets and other goods.[3] Besides ivory, wax, pepper, and grains, about 2,000 pounds of pure gold reached the United Provinces annually from Guinea. The quantity of gold that continued to arrive from Guinea was a matter of great concern to the authorities, who sought ways and means to regulate it. It has been estimated that until about 1630 almost all the gold used for the coinage of the United Provinces came from Guinea,[4] but in spite of the importance of the Guinea trade to the United Provinces, efforts to get a chartered company to undertake the Guinea trade remained unsuccessful until 1621.

Official reluctance to permit the formation of the company may be accounted for by the internal politics of the United Provinces

[1] De Marees, op. cit., p. lvi; J. K. J. de Jonge, *De Oosprong van Neerland's bezittingen op de Kust van Guinea* (The Hague, 1871), p. 9; Ratelband, *São Jorge da Mina*, pp. lxvi, lxxxii; Cousins, 'The Dutch West India Company on the West Coast of Africa up to 1660' (M.A. thesis, Belfast, 1953), p. 16.

[2] De Jonge, op. cit., p. 13; Cousins, op. cit., p. 18.

[3] De Marees, op. cit., pp. 51–5; de Jonge, op. cit., pp. 30, 33–9.

[4] Boxer, *The Dutch in Brazil 1624–1654* (Oxford, 1957), p. 6.

at this time. Between 1568 and 1648 the Dutch were engaged in a costly war with Spain for their independence. This war eventually changed the commercial and financial centre of Europe from Antwerp to Amsterdam. Many people who fled from the southern Netherlands to Holland brought capital and skills that made Holland a strong commercial power.[1] It was during the period of struggle between the United Provinces and Spain that the Crowns of Portugal and Castile were united, thus making Portugal the enemy of the United Provinces. To the Dutch traders, therefore, an attack on Portugal in Guinea was an extension of their legitimate war with Spain. But despite this state of war, the States-General would not allow a chartered company to be formed to undertake the Guinea trade. The greatest single obstacle in this regard was the truce of 1609. The Advocate Oldenbarnvelt used this to veto the idea of a chartered company, because it was felt that its formation would be an infringement of the terms of the truce.

On the Guinea coast, however, the truce increased the dangers of the Dutch. From 1609 onwards the Portuguese secured Spanish help to guard their Guinea possessions. During this time a sloop of Elias Trip from Amsterdam was attacked and its crew killed at Elmina,[2] and this made the merchants increase their demand for official support. Three years after this incident Carvalho and Marinho, two representatives from the king of Asebu in Gold Coast, made a successful trip to Holland to request Dutch help against the Portuguese, who, they alleged, had begun to molest them for their trade with the Dutch.[3] This was soon followed by the building of Fort Nassau at Moure in Asebu by the States-General in 1612, but the incorporation of a Guinea company, however, was to wait until 1621; by which time the truce had expired and the Advocate Oldenbarnvelt had been executed.

Count Maurice of Nassau, who succeeded the Advocate, was the head of the militant party in the United Provinces and gave ready support to the formation of the company. But the company that was chartered in June 1621 differed in all essentials from what had been advocated by Willem Usselincx, the spiritual grandfather of

[1] V. Barbour, *Capitalism in Amsterdam in the Seventeenth Century* (Baltimore, 1950), p. 23.

[2] De Jonge, op. cit., p. 15; Cousins, op. cit., p. 64.

[3] N.B.K.G. 222/198, Reply of Gen. Valckenburg to L. Stavely, 30 Nov. 1656; 'Deductie van Valckenburg', in de Jonge, op. cit., p. 64; Ratelband, op. cit., p. xxiv.

the Dutch West India Company whose aims were, among other things, the formation of Dutch agricultural colonies in the New World. He singled out Brazil as an example of the type of colonies he envisaged, for the wealth of Brazil, unlike that of Peru and Mexico, depended on products such as sugar, cotton, and Brazil wood. He also advocated the teaching of the 'true christian religion' to the inhabitants of such colonies.[1] But when the company was eventually chartered it diverged from what Usselincx had for so long advocated.

From the beginning the company was thought of as 'an instrument of doing Spain as much damage as possible' and thus being able 'to contribute its share' towards the complete liberation of the United Provinces.[2] The company became a semi-official, semi-independent commercial and naval enterprise, and it was given a monopoly of trade and navigation between the Tropic of Cancer and the Cape of Good Hope. It was also empowered to make alliances for, and on behalf of, the States-General; to appoint governors, officials, and justices; and to maintain troops and garrisons. In time of war, troops and necessary war materials for the defence of the projected colonies were to be supplied by the States-General.[3]

Administratively the company had a complicated system of organization, which was the outcome of the provincialism of the United Provinces. Although the principal shareholders were in the province of Holland, there were many other individual merchants who wanted their provinces to share in the profits of the Guinea trade. Therefore the company was divided into different chambers, with the highest administrative body vested in the council of nineteen Directors known as the Heeren XIX. The chambers were proportionately represented in the Heeren XIX. Amsterdam, with the highest number of shareholders, had four-ninths of the seats;

[1] Menkman, *De West Indische Compagnie*, p. 30; Boxer, op. cit., p. 7; Cousins, op. cit., p. 22; B. M. H. Vlekke, *Evolution of the Dutch Nation* (New York, 1945), p. 213.

[2] W. J. van Hoboken, 'The West India Company: A Political Background', *Britain and the Netherlands* (Oxford and Netherland Historical Conference, 1959), p. 42; P. Geyl, *The Netherlands Divided* (London, 1936), p. 189; G. Edmundson, 'Dutch Power in Brazil,' *E.H.R.* 11 (1896), 233–5; J. de Laet, *Jaerlijck Verhael*, 1e deel, bks. i–ii (1624–6), ed. S. P. L'Honore Naber, in *L.V.* xxxv (The Hague, 1931), 8–40.

[3] Menkman, op. cit., pp. 44, 127, 162; Cousins, op. cit., p. 38. When the company's charter expired in 1647 it was renewed without any substantial changes in the administration. In 1674 the council of XIX was changed to the council of X when the new company was formed.

Zeeland was given two-ninths, the Maas (Rotterdam) one-ninth, the North Quarter one-ninth, Town and Country one-ninth, and the nineteenth member of the council was chosen by the States-General, to be the president of the council.[1] Unlike the English companies, which found it difficult to raise substantial capital for their enterprises, the West India Company did not experience this difficulty, because the incorporation of the company was followed by a grant of a subsidy of one million florins from the States-General.

On the Guinea coast the headquarters of the Dutch were moved from Moure to Elmina in 1637, and when the Portuguese were finally driven off the coast in 1642 the Dutch divided their West African possessions into three districts: the northern, the southern, and the São Thomé districts. The most important of them was the northern district, which extended along the Gold and Slave Coasts to Cape Lopes Goncalves.[2] The head of the district was the Director-General, who had over-all charge of military, commercial, and ecclesiastical affairs. He was assisted in his work by a council, of which he was president. Matters concerning the day-to-day administration were discussed by a council composed of the fiscal, the chief factor, the ensign, and the accountant-general. But in extraordinary councils the chief factors of the outposts attended the meeting.[3] Where there were no forts or lodges, the Dutch permanently stationed ships to conduct trade.[4] All commodities except slaves, which were purchased at the outposts, were sent to Elmina.

During the first thirteen years of the company's existence the United Provinces imported from Guinea about 40,461 marks of gold, estimated to be worth about 17,733,899 florins, and 1,137,430 pounds of ivory worth about 1,178,688 florins.[5]

Dutch claims to the Gold Coast were soon challenged by other European powers, especially the English, who resented the fact that the Dutch enjoyed most of the Gold Coast trade. They therefore soon set out in 'a conscious imitation of the Dutch' in order to outbid Amsterdam in their navigational contest, which was carried

[1] De Laet, op. cit. ii. 8–40; Boxer, op. cit., p. 7; Cousins, op. cit., p. 38.

[2] O.W.I.C. 9, 19 June 1642.

[3] W. Bosman, *A New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea* (London, 1721), pp. 92–102.

[4] These ships, which were different from ordinary cruisers, were known as Leggers.

[5] Ratelband, op. cit., p. lxxx; Cousins, op. cit., p. 114; de Jonge, op. cit., p. 15.

on all over the world.[1] Luckily for them, national loyalties mattered little to the various employees of the companies in the seventeenth century. The English successes on the Gold Coast in the early years were due to the efforts of Arent de Groot, a former Dutch employee who went over to their side in the early 1630s 'at the request of some London merchants'. In August 1632 he arrived on the Gold Coast in the service of the English, and finally succeeded in winning Anomabo and Kormantse for them.[2]

Between 1642 and 1650 the struggle on the coast was a straight fight between the Dutch and the English, but this underwent a drastic change in the second half of the seventeenth century, with the sugar revolution in the New World and its resultant demands for West African slaves.[3] The Gold Coast, which had been a gold mine both literally and figuratively for the Dutch, now became a 'slave mine' for virtually the whole of western Europe. The Swedes, the Danes, and the Brandenburgers came for their share, and the French occasionally reappeared on the scene.

All these newcomers whose companies traded on the Gold Coast owed part of their success to Dutch capital and Dutch servants.[4] Some of the companies, however, could not survive in the highly competitive atmosphere. The Swedish company that appeared in 1650 had a very rapid success. From its modest settlement at Cape Coast it spread its influence until by 1655 it had established itself at Boutre, Anomabo, Osu, Takoradi, Jumore, and Cape Apolonia.[5] The success, however, was short-lived, and by 1664 it had faded away. The Danes, like the Swedes, established themselves first at Cape Coast in Fetu, but were forced by the competition of the English and the Dutch to abandon their headquarters, Carolusborg, in 1684. Henceforth Danish activities were concentrated on the eastern seaboard from Accra to Keta. The Brandenburgers were also eventually squeezed out. This 'Slave Rush' and the 'scramble for the Gold Coast' profoundly affected the political and economic systems of the country.

[1] Sir George Downing, quoted in Cousins, op. cit., p. 10.

[2] O.W.I.C. 13, Protest of Arent de Groot to the Dutch, 26 Aug. 1640. Blake, 'The Farm of the Guinea Trade', op. cit., p. 89 n.

[3] J. Bandinel, *Some Accounts of the Trade in Slaves from Africa* (London, 1842), p. 47; Fage, *Ghana*, p. 46.

[4] Barbour, op. cit., pp. 130–42; E. Donnan, *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade* (Washington, 1930–5), i. 77–8.

[5] O.W.I.C. 13/La Ab/199, Protest from Ruychaver to Caarlof, 29 June, 24 Nov. 1650, 22 July 1651; 5 Sept. 1656. O.W.I.C. 7, Deductie van Valckenburg tegen de Zweedische Africaensche Comp, 1656.

Of all the European competitors on the seventeenth-century Gold Coast, the most persistent were the English and the Dutch, whose commercial competition in Europe was transferred to West Africa. From the beginning they sought to outbid each other by economic measures. Each tried to damage trade for the other by the method of underselling. They also used presents, threats, and promises to get African rulers to eject their rivals, and in some instances they resorted to direct attacks on each other. In the 1640s Anglo-Dutch struggles were concentrated in Fetu and Fante. When the English succeeded in obtaining a foothold at Kormantse, the Dutch stationed a ship on the coast expressly to spoil their trade.[1] In 1640 there were charges and counter-charges against both sides: the English blamed the Dutch when the people of Anomabo seized their flag.[2] In 1645 the fear of the English gaining a footing at Accra led the Dutch to suggest the building of a school there in order, apparently, to win the support and sympathy of the local people.[3]

The relations between the two powers were, however, punctuated with occasional friendliness. During the first Anglo-Dutch war, the two companies on the Gold Coast entered into a gentleman's agreement whereby they promised not to attack one another. The two chief officials, Ruychaver on behalf of the Dutch, and George Middleton, the English chief at Kormantse, agreed that, in the absence of directives from Europe, they would continue to pursue free trade on the Guinea coast. In case orders came from Europe to attack, each would give the other ten days of grace for preparations.[4] But this spirit of friendly co-existence was temporary. In the 1660s there was a progressive deterioration in Anglo-Dutch relations that culminated in the second Anglo-Dutch war of 1664–5. Between 1661 and 1662 the English reported that six of their ships had been seized by the Dutch. The seizures, which may be taken as part of the general Dutch policy of engrossing the whole of the Gold Coast trade, were directly caused by Dutch ambition to gain exclusive control of Fante and Fetu. In 1659 Cape Coast fort fell to the Fetu under John Claessen, and English flirtations with Claessen led the Dutch to

[1] O.W.I.C. 9, From J. Ruychaver to the XIX, 13 Dec. 1644. O.W.I.C. 9, Attestation against the English, 20 Nov. 1645.

[2] O.W.I.C. 13, Arend Jacobsz to the XIX, 30 Mar., 16 Apr. 1640.

[3] O.W.I.C. 13/1, 14 July 1640. The Dutch accused the English of persuading the king of Asebu to sell Fort Nassau to them.

[4] O.W.I.C. 13/226–9, Agreement between Ruychaver and Middleton, 6 Jan. 1653.

place a blockade along the whole coast from Komenda to Kormantse. When this was disregarded, English ships were seized or driven off the coast.[1] In 1663 the Royal Adventurers, who had recently obtained a monopoly of the Gold Coast trade, sought and obtained help from Charles II, who dispatched Captain Holmes to Guinea with instructions, among other things, to consult with the commanders and 'if . . . you judge yourself strong enough to maintain the right of his Maty's subjects by force, you are to do it and to kill, sink, take and destroy such as oppose you . . .'.[2]

What Holmes captured on the Gold Coast were recaptured by Admiral de Ruyter, whose gains were entrenched in the Treaty of Breda in 1667.[3] On the Gold Coast the outcome was that the English lost Kormantse and gained Cape Coast. One immediate result was the debt which the Dutch contracted. To enable them to capture Kormantse from the English they had been forced to hire the services of the Fante with a promise to pay approximately £32 for each Dutch ship which landed at Fante.[4]

After the war there were brief spells of peace and at times reconciliation between the Dutch and the English; for instance, the reappearance of the French on the Gold Coast at the beginning of the eighteenth century provided a temporary unifying force. During the war of the Spanish Succession, the Dutch ordered their officials on the Gold Coast to prevent the French from gaining a foothold,[5] but at the same time the French were planning to build a fort at Assini. In the east the fear that the French would succeed in winning the king of Akwamu to their side led to a hastily drawn up Akwamu–Dutch agreement in 1703.[6] In 1710 the rival companies of England and Holland made an agreement to help each other curb the power of the Fante, who had been terrorizing their servants by seizures and threats. As a result of the Fetu River Convention, both companies joined forces in 1711 to attack John Konny of Pokoso (Prince Town).

[1] C.O. 1/23, Letter from General Wilree to the Captain of ship *St. James*, 8 Nov. 1662. For circumstances leading to the second Anglo-Dutch war see Zook, op. cit., pp. 42–62; Lucas, op. cit., pp. 98–9; D. Ogg, *England in the Reign of Charles II* (London, 1934), p. 283; K. Feiling, *British Foreign Policy 1660–1672* (London, 1930), p. 125.

[2] Quoted by Zook, op. cit., p. 42.

[3] V.W.I.S. 1166, Agreement of Peace between Great Britain and the United Provinces at Breda; Lucas, op. cit. iii. 99.

[4] W.I.C. 917, Report of W. de la Palma to the X, 25 Sept. 1702.

[5] W.I.C. 917, Report of J. V. Sevenhuysen to the X, 30 May 1701.

[6] W.I.C. 917, From W. de la Palma to the X, 10 Oct. 1703.

But distrust on both sides was too deep-rooted to allow for any lasting and concerted effort. Both sides supported rival states and helped prolong the Dutch–Komenda war of 1694 to 1700.[1] Whatever the official policies of the governments of the trading companies, the traders on the coast often found it difficult to agree.

Postlethwayt, writing in the eighteenth century, gave an idea of the importance of the Guinea trade to the economy of Britain, and his view is probably applicable to the latter part of the seventeenth century also. He said: 'the African trade is so very beneficial to Great Britain, so essentially necessary to the very being of her colonies, that without it neither could we flourish nor they long subsist.'[2] Because of the importance attached to it, both Britain and Holland employed all methods including war to increase their share of it, since both sides acknowledged the impossibility of living together in peace. One English official on the coast, recounting Dutch activities that he described as 'dishonourable', concluded that the Dutch were in all matters 'unchangeable and the same', and the redoubtable Sir Dalby Thomas unmincingly called them 'the greatest Amboina Rogues in the World'.[3]

If relations between the Europeans were constantly strained as a result of competition, their relations with the local states were no better. From the Portuguese period onwards the Europeans followed the pattern of contracting treaties with the chiefs within whose territories they established their forts. These treaties and contracts were given various interpretations according to the understanding of the contracting parties. Since in contracting the agreements presents were almost invariably given to the local chiefs and their elders, the exchange of gifts frequently occasioned misunderstandings as to the real significance of these treaties. These presents were considered by the Africans as mere tokens of friendship, but the Europeans at times claimed they represented the purchase of the land on which their fort stood. Some rulers could not understand why some of the Europeans should attempt to prevent them from granting lands to other Europeans who desired to trade in their state. The local chiefs refused to stand by the interpretations which

[1] W.I.C. 124/2, Agreement between the Dutch and the English concerning Fanti, 4 Apr. 1710; W.I.C. 124/2/, The Fetu River Convention, 20 Sept. 1711.

[2] M. Postlethwayt, quoted by E. C. Martin, 'English Establishments on the Gold Coast', *T.R.H.S.*, 4th series, 5 (1922), 170.

[3] T70/5/18, Charles Hayes on the History of the Affairs of Africa from 1689 to 1694, 1 Mar. 1706; T70/5/29, Sir Dalby Thomas to R.A.C., 16 Mar. 1706.

their European friends placed on the agreements. All along the coast the numerous petty states sought to benefit from the European trade, and as the Europeans looked for places to establish their posts, rivalries sharpened on both sides.

The greatest single disintegrating force in politics was the importation of firearms. These weapons were used to pursue policies of territorial aggrandisement, which in turn fed the slave marts with the victims of wars and raids. Whether there were wars or peace, the end-product was commercially profitable, as wars produced slaves, while gold could be worked in peace-time. But although all the trading companies desired gold, the emphasis gradually came to be placed on slaves. In 1710, it was estimated that goods costing 7,200 florins in Holland could be sold for 20,000 florins on the Gold Coast.[1] On the Guinea coast the Dutch bought slaves for 45 florins per head, and sold them in the New World at 210 florins per head. The 6,000 slaves that the Dutch exported annually from the Guinea coast after 1700 fetched them as much as 1,260,000 florins in the New World. After allowing for all expenses and losses due to deaths in the Middle Passage estimated at 390,000 florins, the net gain of the Dutch was about 670,000 florins.[2] Although a greater number of the slaves from the Guinea coast were obtained from the Slave Coast, the Gold Coast settlements also yielded a fair amount of slaves. Judging from what the Dutch obtained from their least-profitable posts, one may be able to have an idea of the volume of the trade. In 1717 the balance sheet for the forts at Moure, Kormantse, Boutre, Komenda, and Sekondi, for the twelve years from 1705 to 1716, showed that a net profit of about 239,742 florins had been made on goods valued at 7,755,965 florins that had been sent. Commodities such as 67,299 pounds of ivory, 1,025 slaves, and 1,983 marks 5 ounces of gold had been purchased by the factors of the above-named forts.[3] To assess the total volume of trade one must add what was obtained by the English, the Danes, the Brandenburgers, the Ten Per Cent men, and a host of other interlopers.

Not only in the commercial and political fields, but also on the social side, the concentration of European forts showed marked effects. Conditions on the Gold Coast confined the Europeans to the

[1] W.I.C. 484, From J. van Sevenhuysen to the X, 15 Jan. 1701.

[2] W.I.C. 484/300, W.I.C. 917/50, From W. de la Palma to the X, 4 Oct. 1704–9 June 1705.

[3] W.I.C. 124, Resolution of Director-General and Council, 8 Apr. 1717.

immediate vicinity of their forts. To secure as much trade as possible they depended on African servants and middlemen. Some of the Africans were in the direct employment of the Europeans; others set up their own business as middlemen, and conducted traders from the inland states into the European forts. There also grew up a group of artisans who may be said to be the direct creation of the Afro-European contact. The rise of the new group, which had started in the Portuguese era, was greatly increased in the seventeenth century. It may also be said that the growth of new towns along the coast and the emergence of the new class of wage-earners was one of the most significant developments resulting from the change of the direction of the flow of trade from the north to the south.

# CHAPTER II

# Trading on the Gold Coast

By the end of the seventeenth century the Guinea coastline had been roughly delineated by the Europeans, who adopted names to suit their commercial interest. One may safely describe the divisions as a 'Traders' guide' to the West African coast. From west to east such names as the Grain, Ivory, Gold, and Slave Coasts were given to portions of the coast. Though the areas so designated produced a large proportion of the commodities by which they were known, the West African trade did not easily lend itself to such rigid division. But whatever the degree of overlapping of the different commodities in different regions, it can be positively asserted that the Gold Coast was the principal if not the only source of the gold trade, as is clearly shown by the entries in the books of the Dutch. In February 1705, for instance, when the *Opmeer* returned to Accra after a journey to Benin its cargo consisted of 17,924 pounds of ivory, 4,000 pounds of wax, and 15,015 pounds of rice, and only 4 marks 6 ounces 72 ackies of gold. In the same year the *Valk* brought only the paltry sum of 7 ounces 10 ackies of gold from the Congo. But altogether the Dutch exported 651 marks 6 ounces of gold from the Guinea coast in that year.[1]

That the Gold Coast was the principal source of gold is also supported by the list of the commodities to be bought by cruisers dispatched from Elmina to various parts of the Guinea coast. They show that it was only when such cruisers went to parts of the Gold Coast that they were expected to bring back gold. The list which was supplied to the *Neptune* on its voyage to the western part of the Gold, the Ivory, and the Grain Coasts clearly specified that the carbines it carried were to be exchanged for gold, ivory, and grain.[2] But when the *Anna and Jacoba* was dispatched straight on to the Ivory and Grain Coasts, it was to buy only ivory and grain.[3] Thus it

[1] N.B.K.G. 58/123, Director-General de la Palma's report to the X, 12 Feb. 1705.

[2] W.I.C. 917, Feb., Sept. 1705.

[3] N.B.K.G. 233, Instructions to the skipper C. Prue and Nyendaal, 29 July 1699. In 1718 the Dutch instructed the General on the coast to ascertain the truth about the reports about gold in Benin, see W.I.C. 917, 1 Apr. 1718.

can be maintained that the bulk of the Guinea gold that was sent to Europe from the time of the Portuguese came from the Gold Coast.

From the beginning of the seventeenth century the Dutch realized that the Guinea trade should be well protected because the United Provinces utterly depended on gold from Guinea for its coinage. Laws were therefore passed to ensure a fair and equitable distribution of this valuable commodity to all the various provinces, but notwithstanding official measures the problem was never solved. This is confirmed by the number of occasions on which regulations about gold were made. It was also difficult, if not almost impossible, to prevent people from smuggling gold to places outside the United Provinces. The demand was so great that in the United Provinces itself no effective measures could be found to force the West India Company to sell unminted gold at a fixed price. In 1612, for instance, the mintmaster of Amsterdam complained that the province of Zeeland offered more than the 256 florins which was the fixed value of 1 mark of Guinea gold. Fourteen years later another complaint came from the same quarter that the Amsterdam Bank had sold unminted gold to the East India Company, and unsuccessfully requested the States-General to prohibit such a practice. A few years later the problem came up again when in 1666 the States-General was again requested to forbid the Bank to sell 2,200 marks of unminted gold lately arrived from Guinea to anybody but the Mint. At other times, especially in the 1680s, the States-General was frequently asked to intercede in the bulk sales of gold to one province so as to ensure a fair distribution for all the provincial mints; it was also requested to prohibit the exportation of Guinea gold to the Spanish Netherlands.[1] The gold was needed not only in the United Provinces; at times, it was also used to finance Dutch enterprises elsewhere. In 1646, for instance, 360 marks of gold were sent from Elmina to Brazil to pay the company's servants.[2]

In England, as in the United Provinces, Guinea gold was also a welcome commodity, and all the English companies formed in the seventeenth century were expressly asked to search for it. More often than not their inability to exploit the sources of gold led to

[1] J. G. van Dillen, *Bronnen tot de Geschiedenis der Wisselbanken* (The Hague 1925), p. 69. States-General, 5373, 30 Dec. 1628, 5372, 20 July 1666, 8 Oct. 1668, 5373, 25 Apr. 1682.

[2] O.W.I.C. 11/19, van der Wel to XIX, 23 Mar. 1646. The Directors of the W.I.C. monopolized the lime juice coming from Guinea in the early beginning, see Ratelband, op. cit., p. 44, n. 1. The juice was also used in the slave ships.

the granting of new charters to those who promised to compete with the Dutch.[1] In the 1650s, when lack of capital forced the English to lease out the forts on the Gold Coast to the East India Company, that company found the gold trade profitable and handy. From the Gold Coast gold could be taken by the East India Company for its trade in India; but for the strong court pressures and interest in the formation of the Company of Royal Adventurers in 1660, the East India Company would have gladly held on to the Gold Coast.

Admittedly the exact proportion that Guinea gold formed in the total gold import to England in this century may never be known. But an accurate enough picture can be formed from the activities of the Company of Royal Adventurers. During its short period of existence, it claimed that it had annually imported £200,000 worth of gold to Britain and had carried £100,000 worth of African slaves to the British colonies in the New World.[2] The record of the Royal African Company, which succeeded the Royal Adventurers, was also impressive. From 1674 to 1714 the company minted 548,327 guineas from gold imported from the Gold Coast into Britain.[3] The importance attached to the Guinea gold may be seen from the fact that the coins bore the company's emblem of an elephant, and were called 'Guineas', after the gold's place of provenance. But it was not only the Dutch and the English who took away gold from the Gold Coast; there were also the Danes, the Brandenburgers, the French, the Portuguese, and a host of other interlopers whose receipts may never be found. At the turn of the seventeenth century it was estimated that the annual gold receipt from the Gold Coast totalled 7,000 marks or £224,000.[4] Besides gold there were other equally commercially important commodities such as ivory and slaves.

On the Gold Coast the Europeans soon discovered that trading was a complicated transaction. Apart from the variety of goods and methods that were adopted, a seasoned trader had to take account of the conservative but selective taste of the African consumers.

[1] Blake, 'Farm of the Guinea Trade', op. cit., p. 88. C.O. 1/11/13, Dec. 1649: in the long remonstrance to the Board of Trade there is no mention of slaves. It was asserted that since the grant they have never yet sought into the land for the discovery of the mines, but make their private benefits by wood, elephant teeth, hides . . . and small quantities of gold.

[2] C.O.I. 20, Humble Petition of the Royal Adventurers, *c.* 1668.

[3] Davies, op. cit., p. 181; Davies asserts that the amount of gold from Guinea was about 7 per cent of the total gold to Britain when Guinea gold reached the highest peak, i.e. 1677–89.

[4] Bosman, op. cit., p. 85; Fage, *Ghana*, p. 47.

It is true that the volume of trade increased considerably in the course of time, but throughout the period African traders were found to be extremely tenacious and difficult to persuade, since they always preferred old and tried goods to new ones.[1] In almost all instances it was they who dictated the terms of trade by subjecting the European goods to local specifications as regarded colour and quality. Little wonder that the Portuguese pioneers and their successors first had to learn to adopt and gradually to adapt the West African system to theirs. At first they found it necessary to bring similar goods to those that had been made popular by the other 'long-distance traders' who had already preceded them. This probably explains why the first easily saleable goods were shawls from the North African states of Morocco and Tunisia.[2]

Equally interesting and far more significant is the fact that the early Portuguese traders played a leading role in facilitating the carrying of locally manufactured goods from other parts of West Africa to the Gold Coast. It was on account of this that in 1487 they established a factory at Gwato, the port of Benin, from where they collected cotton cloths, leopard skins, and beads, as well as slaves to be exchanged for gold on the Gold Coast.[3] Later they also brought such goods as beads and cotton cloths from Allada, the Cape Verde Islands, and the Ivory Coast to the Gold Coast. Between 1633 and 1634 the Dutch alone imported about 12,641 pieces of Benin cloth to the Gold Coast.[4]

Despite their near monopoly of the carrying trade, much still remained in the hands of the African middlemen, for, however much the Europeans tried, the Africans could not be displaced. This was because the Europeans never went into the inland states where the local industries were sited. But the competition to assume the role of middlemen in the local trade occasioned disputes between the Africans and Europeans. In 1647, for instance, a quarrel was sparked off by the Dutch when they attempted to oust the Axim middlemen from the lucrative trade in Quaqua cloths (cloths from the Ivory Coast).[5]

Another very important item of trade associated with places east

[1] T70/102/47–50, John Snow to R.A.C., 31 July 1705.

[2] Wilks, 'A Medieval Trade Route from Niger to the Gulf of Guinea', *J.A.H.* 3. ii. 337; Pereira, op. cit., p. 116; J. D. Fage, *Ghana*, p. 42.

[3] Blake, *West Africa* i. 93; Pereira, op. cit., p. 127; de Marees, op. cit., p. 184.

[4] O.W.I.C. 11, 6 Sept. 1633, O.W.I.C. 11/4/1634.

[5] O.W.I.C. 11/159, 204, 3 July, 11 Oct. 1647.

of the Gold Coast was the Acori (Akory, cori) bead. It was highly prized and very much in demand on the Gold Coast. The beads, which looked like glass, were described as having 'neither lustre nor beauty', but in a place like Assini Acori was so much esteemed that a bead was exchanged 'in its own weight' for gold.[1] This industry became so important that by the end of the seventeenth century a lucrative bead industry had been established on the Gold Coast, and some parts of the country, such as Accra and Akwamu, were said to have been producing their own beads. But on the whole the Gold Coast remained a centre of a secondary bead industry, where beads were broken into smaller pieces and shaped to suit local specifications. The people grew so adept at the craft that one observer noted that the Africans could 'understand the false coral and harden wax in imitation of it'.[2]

Salt-making was also an important industry that was keenly patronized by the local traders. This commodity had long been in demand throughout the whole of western Sudan.[3] In the medieval Sudanese empires, for instance, it was a cardinal policy of rulers to gain control of the sources of salt supply, because salt was so prized that the gold producers exchanged it for its own weight in gold. The great demand for salt on the Gold Coast led 'blacks all along the coast to be enriched by boiling or making salt'.[4] Although an inland salt deposit was found around Daboya in the Gonja state, this salt was not greatly relished by the Akan in general and by the Asante in particular, who normally preferred the salt which came from the coast.[5] It was on account of their preference for the white coastal salt that Asante salt merchants came in large numbers to the coast at the end of the seventeenth century. The number of traders involved brought the Europeans into the salt trade early in

[1] Loyer, 'Abstract of a voyage to Assini', in Astley, *Collections* ii. 432.

[2] T70/5/91, From Grosvenor to R.A.C., 26 Jan. 1713. Dapper asserts that 'de Veneetse bevisen of kralen, die zij in grote meenighten verslijten, smijtenze in vier of vijf stukjes, en slijpen die op eenen steen, gelijk de kinderen de kersse-stenen hier te landen slijpen, en dragenze geregen aen basten van bomen, om den hals, handen en voeten' (p. 108).

[3] Bovill, op. cit., pp. 57, 236. He asserts that to the 'African salt was so infinitely the more important that it is no overstatement to say that gold was valued by the Sudanese almost for its purchasing power in salt'. Among the Akan of Ghana it was considered the height of generosity to present salt as gifts. The appellation 'Wato Nkyene Akye', literally 'a free distributor of salt', was used as praise.

[4] Bosman, op. cit., p. 288; Barbot, op. cit., p. 205.

[5] Mahmoud El-Wakkab, 'Qissatu Salga Tarikhu Gonja', *G.N.Q.* iv (1962), 6.

the eighteenth century, in an attempt to monopolize the carrying of Accra salt, which was the 'commanding commodity with the Ashantee trade'.[1]

At times ships were regularly sent to Accra for this purpose. In 1709, for instance, the English regretted that they were unable to persuade one Captain Greaves of the *Olive* to go to Accra for salt to compete with the Dutch, who had brought a shipload from there. The great demand for salt brought a boom to the industry in Accra, where the Europeans took steps to ensure their regular supplies by granting credit facilities in the off-season period to Africans who were to pay them in salt. For the £120 worth of firearms sold by the Dutch in 1716, for instance, they demanded payment in salt.[2] For the off-season, other distant sources of salt were explored. Sir Dalby Thomas even recommended in 1709 that the English should give careful consideration to carrying salt from an island near Antegua to the Gold Coast, since he anticipated that it 'may be the chief article for trade'.[3] Nothing came of this suggestion, but English interest in the trade continued into the 1720s. Together with other Europeans they came to exercise a virtual control over the salt ponds in Accra, Smith observing in 1724 that the English controlled ponds near the James Fort which were 'sufficient to supply not only the Gold Coast but the ships that trade there'.[4]

However, the most important commodities needed for external trade were gold, slaves, ivory, and kola nuts (the last item being sent northwards). Although in theory the rulers had over-all possession of most of these commodities, since each individual had absolute control of what accrued to him as a result of his labour every member of the community could have something to sell. The contemporary European observers saw little of life in the interior, and so remained ignorant of how and exactly where most of the commodities were produced. Attempts by the Europeans even to view, let alone to possess, gold mines were unsuccessful. Early Portuguese and Dutch attempts at gold mining met no success. Both attempted to mine gold at Egyira, but local opposition, coupled with ill luck, conspired against them. In the 1670s the Dutch dispatched one Jan Baptiste

[1] T70/5/57, Sir Dalby Thomas to the R.A.C., 8 May 1709.

[2] N.B.K.G. 82, From Accra to Elmina, 7 Jan., 19 Apr. 1716.

[3] T70/5/58, 9 June 1709. T70/5/111, 16 July 1712, that the English had in stock 'salt for the King of Ashanti'.

[4] J. Atkins, 'A Voyage to Guinea', in Astley, *Collections*, p. 616; W. Smith, 'Thirty different Draughts of Guinea', in Astley, op. cit., p. 617.

Lieferinck to prospect for gold along the beaches of the Gold Coast.[1] This was followed by a similar attempt in 1718 by one Coster, who was to prospect for gold in the neighbourhood of Axim,[2] but nothing came from the ventures. Like all the other commodities the flow of gold to the coast was tied up with the politics of the inland states, where it was produced. In 1647, for instance, the Dutch forecast an unfavourable gold receipt for 1648 because of the inland wars, 'which will make gold scarce'.[3] Between 1668 and 1676, when there were troubles between the Akwamu and their neighbours, as well as struggles between the inland states of Adansi and the rising Denkyira, the total amount of gold collected by the Dutch came to only 3,150 marks; but gold became more scarce from 1698 to 1704, when the Asante–Denkyira wars virtually affected all the major gold-producing areas.[4]

Another important commodity was ivory and, as with gold, everybody could search for it; but unlike gold mining, hunting for elephants was very dangerous. Aside from the scarcity of elephants in the thickly wooded regions of the Gold Coast, the job required more than ordinary skill and courage. Most of the ivory sold on the coast came from the woodland fringes of the forests. Asante, for instance, which traded much in ivory, obtained most of its supply from the western part of the country, especially from Ahafo and Gyaman,[5] and also from the markets of Gonja and Dagomba in the north. To the east, most of the ivory came from the Afram plains, from where it was brought down the Volta to Accra and the eastern part of the country by the Kwawu.[6] Although rich merchants could and did buy ivory and send it to the coast, on the whole more of this commodity was controlled by the chiefs. Little wonder then that the ivory trade was mainly associated with the rulers; this was because, by custom, part of the ivory obtained in each state had to be given to the ruler, who used some for ornamental purposes and sold the rest for his upkeep.

[1] O.W.I.C. 10, From the XIX to Elmina, 1673.

[2] W.I.C. 463, From the X to Elmina, 1718. O.W.I.C. 11/159, From Elmina to the XIX, 17 Oct. 1647.

[3] T70/10/51, From Cormantine, 29 Dec. 1682.

[4] W.I.C. 917, From Sevenhuysen to the X, 15 Apr. 1700; W.I.C. 917/20, From Sevenhuysen to the X, 28 May 1701; W.I.C. 484/236, Report of W. de la Palma, Oct. 1703–Feb. 1704.

[5] T. E. Bowdich, *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Azantee* (London, 1819), p. 332. Asserts that most of the Asante gold came from Kong in Gyaman.

[6] W.I.C. 124, Report on the Journey from Fida to Accra, 17 Feb. 1718.

Though scarce, ivory returns from the Gold Coast are impressive. This is well illustrated from the Dutch records, which show that by 1717 they had collected as much as 67,299 pounds of ivory from five of their least-paying possessions in the twelve years between 1705 and 1717. But the main sources of ivory were the Ivory Coast, Benin, Cameroons, and Angola. In many cases, however, ivory from these regions was first sent to the Gold Coast, thus creating the impression that much of the commodity came from this coast. In 1693, for instance, 2,475 pounds of ivory that the *Postilion* carried from Elmina were described as cargo from the Gold Coast.[1] But in fact this had come from elsewhere. The biggest single haul of ivory from the Gold Coast was in 1706, when the English shipped 339 teeth of twenty-seven pounds each, which was described as something never seen 'before from the Gold Coast'.[2] Despite the difficulties involved in obtaining the commodity from the Gold Coast the English grew very optimistic about the trade, and hoped that it would improve every year.

Slaves, which became the dominant exportable commodity at the end of the seventeenth century, were also normally not easy to come by. It is true that slavery, a universal human institution, had long existed on the Gold Coast as elsewhere before the arrival of the Europeans. Debt, captivity in war, and criminal offences could easily lead people into slavery, and these appear to have been the means whereby the rich secured slaves. But the outright sale of others as slaves was as incidental as it was irregular, because people did not normally set themselves up as slave dealers. The seizure of men to be put up for sale was certainly foreign to the society. Admittedly there were domestic slaves under the old system, but these were eventually absorbed into the families of their masters. Slaves helped in the acquisition of wealth, in which they came to share and of which they could, at times, take full control. On the other hand the slave trade that followed in the wake of the Europeans was completely different and foreign to the norms of the society. Henceforth, in the transatlantic trade, human beings were considered as ends in themselves. They were commodities. The introduction of the new trade in slaves brought significant and far-reaching changes in the values and the organization of states. It is not without significance that the beginning of the era of the intensive slave trade

[1] W.I.C. 124, From Elmina to the X, 28 Jan. 1693.
[2] T70/5/16, Sir Dalby Thomas to the R.A.C. 6 Mar. 1706, 5 Feb. 1707.

coincided with the growth of sizeable political entities in the forest regions of the Gold Coast. The correlation between the growth of empires and the European trade, especially the slave trade, is one of the most important phenomena in the history of the Gold Coast in the seventeenth century.

It is generally asserted that the slave trade was carried on by the chiefs and their elders as a means to dispose of criminals and other social misfits. Perhaps in the initial stages these offenders were sold; however, this means, surely, could not have fed the insatiable demands of the Europeans. Indeed the evidence in support of this as a source of slaves in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries shows that the method was scarcely used. From the available seventeenth-century records there is a solitary instance of John Kabes of Komenda selling two people described as 'trouble makers'.[1] That this may have been practised in other places may not be denied. But its value as a source of supply in the transatlantic trade is so insignificant that this as a means of obtaining slaves may be ignored.

There is yet an equally interesting assumption that Africans disposed of their children in times of famine to save them from starvation. Some of the slaves obtained by the Portuguese were said to have been 'sent by their parents who think they are doing their children the best service in the world by sending them to be sold in this way to other lands where [there] is abundance of provisions'.[2] Admittedly in times of crisis and disasters it was not unknown for people to be pawned to redeem other members of a family. But such pawns were redeemable in the long run, and were never sold into slavery. To sell pawns as slaves was likely to cause troubles and even lead to wars, as happened between Komenda and Twifo in 1715. Had people willingly sold their kin or themselves as slaves in the hope of better prospects elsewhere, there would have been few incidents of slave riots and attempted suicides, which occurred even before the slaves were taken aboard the ships. And yet these assertions persisted throughout the period of the trade. Such obviously calculated misinterpretations put up by the anti-abolitionists were

[1] T70/5/20, From Komenda to Elmina, 5 Feb. 1707; S. Tenkorang records only nine slaves who were sold for their criminal activities in the eighteenth century. 'British Slave Trading Activities on the Gold and Slave Coasts' (M.A., Thesis, London, 1964), p. 65.

[2] Blake, op. cit., p. 152; A. W. Lawrence, *Trade Castles and Forts of West Africa* (London, 1963), p. 33.

resented by the African rulers, who described as unfounded European gibes that the Africans 'sell their wives and children for the sake of a few kegs of brandy'.[1]

All the evidence suggests that it was the victims of wars and raids that provided the main bulk of the slaves. In such a situation even the most powerful member of society could not be said to be immune from becoming a slave. The uncertainties of the trade affected all concerned, for after these wars 'all who could not redeem themselves' were liable to become slaves. A contemporary European observer was emphatic that virtually all 'slaves shipped from Africa are almost all prisoners of war brought by the inland traders'.[2] This particular state of affairs meant that the supply of slaves was dependent on the nature of inter-state relations. But the slave trade, which throve on wars, greatly languished in the actual period of war, and, paradoxically, in periods of prolonged peace also the trade came to a standstill. In 1685 Barbot was intensely disappointed when on visiting the neighbourhood of Accra, where a French ship had previously shipped over 300 slaves in a short time, he had to wait for three months without receiving a single slave.[3] And the reason? The Akwamu were at peace with their neighbours!

The European factors along the coast noted that wars 'made gold scarce but negroes plenty', and to encourage a continuous flow of slaves the sale of firearms was stepped up. There were instances when firearms were loaned out to states on condition that the proceeds of war-slaves would be sold to them. In 1689 the English invested 'six field pieces and sixty whites [soldiers]' in the Fetu-Abrembo (Abrem) war in the hope that they would receive all slaves captured by Fetu. But to their intense disappointment the slaves were sold to interlopers. In 1706 the English were 'in daily expectation of the Arcanians coming to fight the Cabesterra people'. They hoped that if the Akani became victorious 'there will be a glorious trade in slaves'.[4]

Other means whereby slaves were procured were slave-raiding and the outright kidnapping of unwary and defenceless strangers.

[1] A. Dalzel, *The History of Dahomy* (London, 1793), p. 219; H. W. Debrunner, *Christianity in Ghana*, p. 46.

[2] W.I.C. 116/1181, J. Hippisly on the Gold Coast Trade, 1767, hand copy; Donnan, op. cit., p. 402; Debrunner, op. cit., p. 48.

[3] Barbot, op. cit., p. 186.

[4] W.I.C. 484/144, Sevenhuysen and Council to the X, 30 May 1701; T70/11/35, 27 May 1669, T70/11/37, 31 July 1689; T70/5/31, July–Aug. 1706.

Raids on other states, however, needed a form of official backing, since they normally caused inter-state wars. It was not unknown for bands of musket-armed raiders from a powerful state to make forays on villages of the weaker states. Towards the end of the seventeenth and in the first few decades of the eighteenth century, slave-raiding became an established occupation of the Akwamu. Akyem, Kwawu, Krepi, and villages bordering on the Akwamu territories sometimes became the hapless victims of Akwamu raiders.[1]

An intriguing aspect of this trade is whether wars were fought to secure slaves or whether the slaves were incidental to the wars. There is no denying that the intensification of the slave trade coincided with the creation of powerful forest empires like Denkyira, Akwamu, and Asante. And doubtless the presence of the European goods along the coast was enough to urge on peoples and states to increase their purchasing power. Even without the slave trade it would have been necessary for the rulers to pursue policies of territorial expansion, especially in the auriferous regions, so as to encompass the gold mines within their territories.

What was more, the increased trade between the forest and the coast brought about a measure of prosperity conducive to population growth. Although the exact figures involved cannot be established, the frequent internal migrations from the Adansi region to other parts of the country may be cited as evidence for a population explosion. During such periods there were likely to be frequent clashes, in an effort to secure more land for cultivation. But these clashes were mainly for political reasons, and the victors normally willingly settled with the vanquished. With the establishment of the profitable trade in slaves, however, some of the victims of these clashes may have become commodities. But this does not mean that wars were fought to capture slaves. There is no reason to doubt the veracity of the statements of some of the African rulers Although they were speaking of conditions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries their readiness to hold brief for their ancestors may be well taken. Adandozon (Adahoonzou) of Dahomey, who was considered a despot, told Abson, the British Governor in the eighteenth century, that he never made wars to procure slaves for the European trade. Early in the nineteenth century Osei Bonsu of Asante told Dupuis that he never waged wars 'to catch slaves in the

[1] See Wilks, 'Akwamu', *T.H.S.G.* 3 ii (1967), 99–132.

bush like a thief', and that his 'ancestors never did so'.[1] Although such statements may not be applicable to all the rulers, one thing is clear; the motives of their wars were more political than economic, with the slaves as the incidental products of the wars.

Although anybody could sell slaves to the Europeans, not every member of the state was entitled to receive slaves caught in war. Since declarations of war and peace were reserved for the kings and their elders, it was they who benefited most from them. All captives were theoretically for the king; but it was customary for rulers to reward faithful service and bravery in war with a few slaves. (The town of Agona in Asante is said to have been founded by ɔkɔmfo Anɔkye with captives given him by Osei Tutu after the Asante–Denkyira war.) But rich merchants who could afford it obtained slaves from the slave marts in the north and in places like Fosu, Manso, Esikuma, Abouso, and in turn sold them to the Europeans and their agents.

The political and social organization of the society allowed for both official and private participation in trade. Custom allowed rulers to dispose of what accrued to them on their private and stool estates. But normally there was a special group of people at the king's court—the Gyaase—who traded for the rulers. It was no accident therefore that the Europeans always sought an understanding with the rulers, since by virtue of their position they were the greatest potential traders. The proceeds of war, the produce from the stool lands, tolls and court fines, and the share of game customarily due to them enhanced their purchasing potential. Because of this many observers mistakenly believed that it was only the rulers and their elders who could trade.[2] Although these people traded, commercial activities were never their exclusive monopoly. Practically every member of the community took part in it.

It was also erroneously asserted by some European observers that most of the traders from the interior were trusted slaves who traded on behalf of their masters.[3] That slaves undertook to trade on behalf of their masters cannot be denied; but trading was not necessarily an occupation confined to slaves. What really happened was that on the Gold Coast, where transportation depended on porterage

[1] Dalzel, op. cit., p. 219; J. Dupuis, *Journal of a Residence in Ashantee* (London, 1824), p. 163.

[2] Loyer in Astley, *Collections*, p. 443.

[3] De Marees, op. cit., p. 279; Bosman, op. cit., p. 92; Barbot, op. cit., p. 42.

over long distances, it was necessary to employ many people to convey goods from place to place. In both the northern and southern directions porters were needed. They brought down ivory and gold to the coast and conveyed the pots and pans and the motley of European goods into the interior. A similar pattern had prevailed in the pre-European trade, where porters were also needed to carry salt and fish into the interior.[1] The need for porters persisted into the twentieth century in places that lacked modern means of transportation. A large contingent of porters was also required for the kola trade with the north. A later account of the nothern trade may well explain how trade to the coast was also organized. Although the description applies to the early twentieth century, it is unlikely to have been much different from that of the seventeenth century.

It was observed that, in spite of the services of the Gyaase, who, among other things, traded for rulers, ordinary citizens vied with each other to carry the chief's commodities. The reason is that they enjoyed privileges as 'the King's men' that did not cover the ordinary trader. In addition to the head load that was allotted to such a person, the carrier added his own trade goods to his quota. And by custom the market was open first to the king's men before it was flooded with the commodities of other traders. Thus their goods were assured of a ready market.[2] In addition to the above privileges, these carriers were exempted from the normal tolls. It was because of these incentives that many people, both freemen and slaves, willingly traded for the rulers. When they had no commodities of their own to sell, those who traded for the rich merchants were paid for their services. Porterage, therefore, was not only a lucrative employment but also a means to widen one's horizons by travelling to distant places.

The Europeans continued the Portuguese practice of sending presents and delegations to rulers and their elders, because without that there would have been no prospects of ensuring a regular flow of trade. This is clearly spelt out as the reason why in 1703 the English sent messengers to the three principal caboceers of Akani 'to confirm [them] to the interest of the Royal African Company, and

[1] Blake, *European Beginnings*, p. 93; Fage, *Ghana*, p. 42; Fage, 'Beads and Trade . . .', *J.A.H.* 3. ii, p. 344.

[2] R. S. Rattray, *Ashanti Law and Constitution*, pp. 109–12; K. A. Busia, *Ashanti*, p. 79.

to encourage them to increase the trade between their country and this Castle [Cape Coast]'.[1] Two years previously the Dutch had sought to persuade Osei Tutu of Asante to direct his traders to their forts by presenting him with various types of presents. The indulgence of the kings through whose territories the trade routes passed was also to be assiduously cultivated.[2] Chiefs at times undertook high-level negotiations with neighbouring states for easy passage of their subjects to market-towns. In 1715, for instance, Ofori, king of Akyem Abuakwa, paid about £800 to Akonno of Akwamu to enable Akyem traders to pass through Akwamu to the coast. A similar attempt to secure easy passage through Agona for the Akyem was upset by the former's exorbitant demand for £800 as the price for negotiation.

Much trade appears to have been carried on on behalf of the rulers and a few important people; but the ideal was to encourage everybody to take part, and rulers therefore at times provided capital for up-and-coming captains for economic and political reasons.[3] The defence of the state rested on the efforts of all its citizens. In times of war the safety of the state depended on the number of citizens who could take the field, and when warfare came to depend more on firearms, it was necessary that people should be given the chance and the means to possess their own guns, since men brought their own firearms to fight for the state. (The rulers only provided guns for their bodyguards, formed by the Gyaase.)

The rulers were, however, expected to provide gunpowder for the soldiers during the course of a war. On account of this dependence on their subjects on the Gold Coast, firearms never became a royal monopoly as they were at Dahomey. Latitude in the acquisition of firearms was so great that even during the period of hostility between Denkyira and Asante the latter were said to have been allowed free passage to the coast to buy firearms.[4] The records of the European companies on the coast show that firearms were sold on the open market. Of 200 muskets brought to Cape Coast in 1668, all were sold to local traders on the coast, who, in turn, retailed them to the inland

[1] T70/1463, Castle Memo., 24 Feb. 1703.

[2] N.B.K.G. 233, Director-General and Council, 9 Oct. 1701, also see W.I.C. 917/4, Oct. 1705. The Dutch promised to pay higher prices for the king of Dahomey's goods.

[3] For more about this see Casley Hayford, *Gold Coast Native Institutions* (London, 1904), p. 95; Bowdich, op. cit., p. 295.

[4] Bosman, op. cit., p. 75.

traders. At times the king's messengers and other traders struggled for firearms, and the highest bidder always won.[1]

Successful trading on the coast required a trader to understand the trading language, as well as the complicated system of gold weights involved. The practice of using gold weights goes back beyond the sixteenth century. As far back as 1555 Towerson had observed that the people on the coast 'used weights and measures'. Indeed the evidence suggests that gold weights predated the European arrival on the Gold Coast. This explains why all the names of the weights mentioned by de Marees, except for *quinta*, are Twi. There is no denying that the contact with the Europeans influenced the local weight system. It is not unlikely that the introduction of metal weights may have made it difficult for the poor to come by such sophisticated weights, but the fact that seed weights existed side by side with metal weights meant that no one monopolized the use of gold weights. Indeed, the Africans admirably adapted themselves to the new developments. When copper, tin, and other metals were introduced, it became necessary for them to harmonize their weights with those of the Europeans. However, the new system was used side by side with seed weights such as the dark-blue *pesewa*, the red and black *damma*, and the black *taku*, which are still found in the treasury bag of many old men.[2] These modern seed weights are unlikely to have been any different from the 'weights of a yellow sort of wood' described by Dapper.

In the seventeenth century the *damma*, which was generally worth 2*d*., was the lowest weight for weighing gold. For the purchase of goods on the local market the Europeans had to adopt the local gold weights. This accounts for the fact that in 1708, for instance, the English at Cape Coast requested 'tacco [*taku*] and damboy [*damma*] weights' to be sent from England.[3] The increase in the volume of trade rendered the use of the lowest denominations, *taku* and *damma*, inconvenient. Although they continued to be employed in transactions on the market, where provisions for the factors and the slaves in the Middle Passage were bought, for the bulk trade in the factories it

[1] T70/1464, 8 Dec. 1714. In that year the Asantehene's messenger, Krama, came with other traders demanding guns.

[2] De Marees, op. cit., p. 280; A. Ott, 'Historical Significance of Akan Gold Weights', *T.H.S.G.* 9 (1968), pp. 23–5; Barbot, op. cit., p. 234; Dapper, op. cit., p. 109; Rattray, op. cit., p. 304. Dapper asserts that 'de boeren binnen slants, hebben tot hun behulp, gewichten van hout; en daer-en-boven rode of swarte bonen'.

[3] T70/5/44, Sir Dalby Thomas to R.A.C., 11 Oct. 1708.

was necessary to use heavier weights. The medium employed was the *ackie*, which weighed one-sixteenth of an ounce in the Gold Coast, and which was worth 4*s*. 6*d*. when the ounce of gold was £3. 12*s*. 0*d*. or 5*s*. when the price of gold was £4 per ounce (as it was in the latter part of the seventeenth century).[1] Below are the commonest denominations used in the bulk trade:

*Table of Gold Weights*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 12 Tackus | = 1 ackey | = 5 shillings |
| 16 Ackeys | = 1 ounce | = £4 |
| 2 ounces | = 1 benda | = £8 |
| 4 Benda | = 1 mark | = £32[2] |

A significant development in the trade that took place towards the end of the seventeenth century was the introduction of commodity currency, the ounce trade or sorting. In the course of time European demand for gold and African reluctance to part with their supply led to the introduction of this currency. This device was adopted in the slave trade to provide an acceptable value on the principle of 1:1. Though the commodity currencies were couched in terms of ounces and ackies, an ounce of commodity currency was not worth a similar weight in gold, since the value of the manufactured goods was priced higher above gold. It was generally reckoned that the selling price of the goods on the Gold Coast was to be twice their cost price in Europe. At times referred to as coast currency, slave price, or commodity currency, this trade ounce was what the Europeans paid to the African traders. In their transactions with visiting supercargoes, the Europeans resold the commodities at twice the value of what they had paid to Africans at what was generally known as 'gold price'. At times the practice caused many frictions between visiting vessels and resident Europeans.

The use of the commodity currency on the Gold Coast facilitated trade at the turn of the seventeenth century because otherwise the slave trade, which hindered peaceful pursuits such as gold mining, would have adversely affected all kinds of trade. Owing to the slave trade the Gold Coast had belied its name by the beginning of the eighteenth century, since the Africans were even beginning to demand gold in part and full payment for their slaves and ivory.

[1] Ott, op. cit.; D. Birmingham, 'Fetu', *G.N.Q.* 9 (1966).

[2] T70/5, Sir Dalby Thomas to R.A.C., 7 Oct. 1706; K. Polanyi, 'Sortings and Ounce Trade', *J.A.H.* 5 (1964), iii. 381–95; M. Johnson, 'The Ounce in Eighteenth Century West African Trade', *J.A.H.* 7 (1966), ii. 197–214.

In 1715, for instance, the large number of Asante traders disappointed the Dutch when, instead of goods, they asked for gold. The situation was so acute that the English had to advise their agents on the coast not to pay any gold to the Africans.[1]

The foreign traders faced yet another problem, namely how to keep pace with the selective taste of the Africans. The cut-throat competition by the Europeans enabled the Africans to gratify their unbounded desire for freedom of choice in goods and customers. They began to force the Europeans to change their prices by economic blockades and by the system of underselling that the Europeans themselves had introduced in the 1630s. In 1645, for instance, African opposition to the price of goods compelled the Dutch to spend more liberally in presents before they were able to trade.[2] At times the Africans withdrew their gold from the market to await the arrival of many ships in order to force up the gold price. And in spite of the number of treaties by which the Europeans attempted to monopolize trade in particular localities, none of them, in practice, were willingly given any right of pre-emption against their rivals.

All the Europeans quickly realized that their African counterparts would readily 'use their knives' on all of them at one time or another. In this they took advantage of the fact that there was always a ready alternative supply of manufactured goods from the forts scattered along the coast. At Axim, for instance, the Dutch influence was counterbalanced by the English establishment at Dixcove, and that of the English by the Brandenburg castle at Pokoso. By the end of the century both the Dutch and the English had forts at Komenda. A few miles east of the Dutch headquarters, Elmina, was Cape Coast Castle, the main establishment of the English, which had itself been threatened in the 1660s by the not-so-impressive Danish fort at Fredriksborg. Dutch and English forts were interspersed in Fante, and at Winneba the English claim to monopoly was challenged by the Dutch lodge at Senya Breku. In Accra the Danes, the English, and the Dutch coexisted. Instead of coming together to present a united front, the Europeans carried on a system of commercial espionage on one another and moved their prices up and down to inconvenience their rivals, which was always to the intense advantage

[1] N.B.K.G. 82, 13 Oct. 1715, T70/5, 11 Oct. 1706. Sir Dalby reported that he had sometimes been forced to part with gold. Wilks, 'Akwamu' (M.A. thesis, Cardiff, 1958), p. 77.

[2] O.W.I.C. 11/3, van der Wel to the XIX, 21 Jan. 1645–9 Feb. 1646.

of the Africans. When an English vessel arrived at Kormantse in 1646, one Asante, a trusted servant, came by land to Elmina and informed the Dutch that the English had no linen. This enabled them to put more linen on the market at a higher price.[1] Practically all the European companies depended on such trusted African servants for their success. The records abound in names like Afo, Griffin, Aban, Konny, Asomani, and Kabes, who served one company or another in different capacities.[2]

The best means of ensuring a successful trade at all times was to stock as many different kinds of goods as possible. Thus a successful trader had to combine administrative abilities with the business insight of a market researcher to satisfy the frequent changes in local taste. One had to consider variations in colour and texture of goods, or else the market would be lost to others. In most cases it became necessary for the Europeans to take calculated risks to dispose of goods in the warehouses. It was found almost impossible to forecast what was likely to be demanded in the very near future. While in 1645, for instance, linen, knives, beads, and iron bars were in very great demand, the taste suddenly changed to copper rings two years later.[3] Unless a trader was constantly alive to such local demands and tastes, goods arriving from Europe were likely to be out of fashion by the time they were landed. In the 1680s the local demand for Dutch guns had forced the English to import guns from Holland, but by 1700 it was English guns that were readily sold. Asante traders arriving at Komenda after 1700 usually bought powder from the Dutch and left for Cape Coast to buy guns. This helped John Kabes of Komenda, who was in league with the English to drive a profitable trade with the Asante. The method adopted by the English to solve the problem was the best for any company not wanting to be squeezed out of the trade. After notifying their superiors in London that 'the present great demand throughout the coast is for powder, guns and lead [but] it may happen when you send a quantity of these goods they may be out of demand', they advised that the Directors should supply them with the most easily saleable goods. The dilemma of the traders is better summed up in the following passage.

It is true we are well supplied with perpetts and sheets, which are the two staple commodities, but we humbly conceive that it would be most for

[1] O.W.I.C. II, J. van der Wel to XIX, 3 June 1646; Ratelband, op. cit., p. xi.
[2] See Chs. V, VI.
[3] O.W.I.C. 11, Jan. and Mar. 1647.

your interest always to supply us with some of every sort of more current commodities such as gune [*sic*], gunpowder, tallow, knives, sayes, blankets, carpets, pewter basons, lead bars, iron bars, India and Guinea stuffs, niconees, brawles and tapseels, which will quickly contribute to the dispatch of your ship.[1]

The fluidity of the consumers' demands convinced the established companies that if they could get their warehouses well stocked with the goods they would be able to eliminate the serious threats from the interlopers and the English Ten Per Cent men. They rightly argued that long absences from the Gold Coast would make it difficult for such people to keep up with the rate of change on the local market, 'one sort of goods being in demand this month, another sort the next'.[2]

Another problem was to cater for the peculiarities of specific localities, as tastes differed from place to place on the Gold Coast. It was essential to sort out goods in accordance with the needs of the various forts. Practically all the various colours of perpetuans were in demand, but not all in every trading post. The Asante went in for the red, the Akyem for the yellowish green, the Akwamu for the deep green, the Aowin for red and green; the blue was common to all of them and might be asked for at any time.[3] In 1709, for instance, when Asante trade with their northern neighbours was on the increase, they began to ask for coral, rangoes (English cloth), and cowries, and red and yellow Welsh pagnes (woollen cloth), which they had never demanded before. They changed their taste suddenly because cowries, for instance, were needed to buy slaves, ivory, and shea-butter from the north. When in 1718 the Asante ceased coming to the coast as a result of their war with the Akyem, the English directed that no more silver should be sent to the coast, since 'no negroes buy but the Asantees'.[4] Bedeviled by the frequent

[1] T70/22, Sir Dalby Thomas to R.A.C., 30 Sept. 11 Oct. 1707. India and Guinea stuffs (unglazed cotton cloth).

[2] T70/5, 31 July 1707. A similar argument was put forward by the Dutch, see W.I.C. 917, 31 Aug. 1704.

[3] T70/22, Feb., Mar. 1708. In Jan. 1701 the Dutch reported that they could only dispose of the 90,000 pieces of sayes available by underselling. Interlopers sell at 12–13 yards for an ackie; they must sell at 16 yards. The most saleable goods were carbines and powder, which they sold £7,200 cost price for £20,700. William de la Palma in 1704 had this to say about the Gold Coast trade; 'Het is hemelijk, dat er order alle buitenlands negotie geen soo onseker is, als die van de Goud Kust.' In most cases the materials were unravelled to weave cloths of local design.

[4] T70/22, From W. Johnson to R.A.C., 20 Mar. 1718.

changes and incessant wars, the Dutch, who had varied experiences from many parts of the world, confessed that 'of all trade in foreign countries, none was so uncertain as that of the Gold Coast.'[1]

Whatever their original impressions when they first established themselves on the Gold Coast, the Europeans soon learnt that in commerce their African counterparts were anything but a simple and ignorant people; nothing could be foisted on them. Inability to satisfy their demands, and any default in trade by the Europeans, cost them dearly in prestige and in profit, for once an impression had been created with the inland traders it was almost impossible to undo it.

In spite of all the care and diligence that both sides adopted to avoid being cheated, the transactions were never deceit-proof, although the ease with which the Portuguese duped their African counterparts no longer existed. Certainly by 1600 'broken and patched basons, rusty knives and under-sized linens' were no longer easily sold to the Africans,[2] who carefully and painstakingly re-measured all cloths according to their own measurements; a practice which caused the Europeans some embarrassment. In 1647 for instance Dutch blankets could not be sold at the required price because they were under-sized. In 1700 perpetuans of twelve yards long suddenly went out of vogue, and instead people demanded those measuring sixteen yards.[3] To guard against possible fraud, the Africans insisted on the Europeans opening all bales for their inspection. In 1678, for instance, it was found out that 'on opening the perpetts for the satisfaction of the Acanies' they were short of some yards.[4] Such shortages and damages were quickly replaced to preserve the trader's image and contacts.

It must be admitted none the less that in spite of all the carefulness adopted both sides tried, in some instances successfully, to sell inferior-quality goods. Nothing capable of being adulterated passed unmixed, be it drinkables, guns, gold dust, or slaves. In Bosman's time some African gold traders in Dixcove succeeded in selling £1,700 worth of false gold to two uninitiated English traders.[5] Even in the sale of slaves, the Africans found a means of disposing

[1] W.I.C. 917, W. de la Palma to the X, 31 Aug. 1704.
[2] De Marees, in Purchas, op. cit., pp. 61–2, 282.
[3] W.I.C. 917, J. van Sevenhuysen to the X, 17 July 1700.
[4] T70/20/2, From Bradley to R.A.C., 16 Aug. 1678.
[5] N.B.K.G. 82, From Elmina to the X, 25 June 1715; Bosman, op. cit., pp. 13, 73.

of sick ones by rubbing them down with lime juice to impart a glossy and healthy appearance to their skins in order to elude the detection of surgeons on the slavers. Similarly the Europeans also sold inferior goods. Dutch guns were reported to be 'good for nothing for service', and yet they could be easily sold, because they made them 'so showish that they tempt the blacks to buy them, though they will burst in their hands'. A few years later the English were reported to have sold large quantities of 'second hand guns vampt up'.[1]

The European competition for the market caused by the presence of many traders on the coast made it necessary for the merchants to try a variety of expedients to increase their share of the trade. While some began to send their agents inland to buy commodities, others adopted the practice of issuing promissory notes and crediting goods to the African traders. Better credit facilities were given by the interlopers and the English Ten Per Cent men, who were known to have entrusted 'goods to the value of four to five thousand pounds sterling [to the] Blacks to buy slaves with'.[2] Such a method was adopted because they possessed no permanent establishments on the coast and therefore counted on the greatest co-operation of the local traders. They could only secure the market from the companies by providing better incentives. It was in pursuit of such a policy that they always sold superior-quality goods on generous terms and thereby soon began to attract more of the African traders. Despite the possibility of capture, which might result in the loss of liberty and goods, the interlopers risked everything for the lucrative trade on the coast.

Attempts by the Dutch and the English to dissuade the Africans from trading with interlopers failed. The Fante in general, and the Anomabo traders in particular, would not stop trading with interlopers, because they obtained a higher margin of profit from them. When the English attempted to bypass the middlemen by trading directly with the Asante this was very much resented by the Fante, who threatened never to support the English against Fetu. They even went further than that, by leaguing with the Twifo to intercept traders from Asante and other inland states.[3]

Not only the Europeans but the African traders also offered credit

[1] T70/22, 6 Mar. 1706.

[2] T70/5/34, 53, 30 Sept. 1708, 22 Feb. 1709; T70/5/66, 99, 12 Feb. 1709, 12 Apr. 1714.

[3] T70/5/66, 12 Feb. 1709.

terms. The promissory notes given to the Africans were nothing but a promise to provide, at a later date, the goods an African trader had wanted but that were not immediately available. When the European traders were sufficiently known on the coast, the Africans accepted their promissory notes payable either after the commodities required had been supplied or on their next voyage to the coast.

The system of credits involved risks on both sides. In some instances an interloper might fall on evil days and thus might never return to the coast. If this happened then the Africans were likely to lose what they had advanced. On some occasions the Africans also might not honour their side of the agreement. At best payment took a long time; and, not infrequently, the amount due found its way into the column headed 'bad debt due to sundry traders'. On the whole, however, such cases were unusual. In 1683, when the English had not yet built a castle at Komenda, they 'entrusted goods to the captain of the town (whom we know to be a very honest and responsible person) with a considerable particle of your honour's goods for which he punctually sends us returns as soon as he hath received them'.[1] Despite losses on both sides and official disapproval of the credit system, the practice caught on, and directives from the head offices were ignored. In 1704 it was reported that Staphorst, until recently the Dutch Director-General, had advanced goods to the value of about 1,235 florins[2] to various Africans. The determination of Sir Dalby Thomas to continue the system contrary to the wishes of the Royal African Company well illustrates the importance the Europeans attached to the credit system, which served both economic and political ends. Sir Dalby propped up the queen of Fetu, whom he had forced on the people, by crediting her with goods which he promised to pay for if anything should happen to upset her plans.[3]

Such trust and confidence were well rewarded in many instances, but there were times when both sides defaulted on payment. The Europeans recorded cases, not surprisingly, of non-payment of goods credited. In 1699 as much as £4,000 was owed to the English by twenty-one Africans, including the king of Akani, whose debt amounted to £2,000, and fifteen years later the amount had risen to £43,140. Of this £3,420 was classified as 'Account of supposed bad

[1] T70/16/53, 27 Jan. 1683.
[2] W.I.C. 484, W. de la Palma to the X, 30 May 1704.
[3] T70/1463, Sir Dalby Thomas to R.A.C., July 1704.

debt due to sundry natives'. In 1704 the Dutch company had 1,355 florins in debt. One fascinating feature of these debts was the comments made on them. The 104 florins due from Asomani of Akwamu and his servant Akrofi were given up for lost by the Dutch, for they were convinced that 'nothing [was] to be hoped from both of them'. But Pieter Passop, who owed 720 florins, had a favourable comment. They expected that payment would be made 'even though nothing had been received'.[1]

Admittedly some of the money could have been recovered had the Europeans pressed hard enough. However, there were times when its recovery was judged unwise and prejudicial to trade. When people in the coastal towns contracted debts with the companies they were easily redeemable, especially where rentals and customs duties were to be paid by the Europeans. Some forceful governors and factors could refuse to pay rent on the trivial excuse that there was not enough trade in the town. In 1708 Sir Dalby Thomas refused to pay rent to the Fante 'for want of trade at Anomabo and Agya'.[2] The Dutch had adopted a similar approach with the Fante in 1702. In 1696 they had paid 80 marks to the Fante to enlist their support against the Komenda people. But although the Fante never rendered the services required, they refused to refund the money. However, the Dutch found a way out by refusing to pay the £32 toll on all their ships as they had contracted to do since 1665, when the Fante helped de Ruyter against the English.[3] They claimed that the amount which they withheld would be used to pay for what the Fante owed to them.

The disadvantages inherent in such an action were obvious. It gave the debtors cause to ally with rival companies. In 1696, for instance, one Aban, who left the services of the Dutch for the English, was said to have been owing some money to the Dutch. But because of his influence at Komenda, as John Kabes's uncle, the English 'entered him into the Company's pay'.[4] On a similar count the English lost their influence over Tagee, king of Eguafo, in 1709. Tagee was unable to pay what he owed to the English and therefore allied himself with the Dutch. To avoid such losses John Snow, an English factor, advised that 'the settling of old debts . . .

[1] T70/661, Accounts . . . debt to sundry natives; W.I.C. 484/278, Debts to the Company 1704.

[2] T70/5/49, 11 Oct. 1708.

[3] W.I.C. 917, Sevenhuysen to the X, 25 Sept. 1702

[4] T70/11/118–19, 5 Jan., 11 May 1696.

less injurious to your [the English] interests . . . to get them pay [old] debt by deductions' was prejudicial to trade. He attributed Dutch successes with the Africans to the fact that when they were once 'under this very dilemma, they struck the talleys clear, and made Little Tagee, the late king of Aguaffoe, their friend by it, who was made king at your charge but never durst trust himself with us lest he should be detained for debt'.[1]

On the whole, trading called for great patience and tact. It was necessary for each side to learn to humour the other. A rash action was likely to result in the loss of confidence and profits. When in 1682 one Alexander, a relation of the king of Fetu, seized a Dutch boat at the insistence of the Danes, the Dutch had to treat him with care. Originally they had planned to press for compensation, but they dropped this because he was too powerful for an enemy. A similar treatment was given in 1708 to Osei Tutu of Asante. In that year messengers from Kumasi came to Elmina to complain that the previous Dutch General, Sevenhuysen, had paid insufficiently for eighty pieces of ivory that the king had sent to the castle. All inquiries proved that the ivory had been fully paid for. It was even discovered that, in Sevenhuysen's time, a similar claim had been lodged from the same source. Yet the Dutch paid for the ivory again because it was commercially unwise to incur the displeasure of the Asante.[2]

Such claims, coupled with uncertainties about the regular flow of commodities, could have been overcome had the Europeans made genuine efforts to secure alternative sources of trade. Attempts at finding alternatives were ill thought-out and half-heartedly pursued. Typical examples may be found in unsuccessful Dutch and English endeavours to introduce the plantation system to the Gold Coast. In the latter part of the 1690s the Dutch planned to introduce cotton, indigo, coffee, and sugar plantations to supplement the slave and gold trade. The idea of plantations went back to the 1640s, but it was in 1697 that it was seriously taken up. These plantations were to be used as demonstration farms to encourage Africans to take up the new crops. By 1702 the Dutch had a well-laid-out cotton plantation at Shama. To help in this work Black Pieter, apparently a slave from West Africa, came from Curacao with a cotton mill in 1703.

[1] T70/102/47–50, From John Snow to the R.A.C., 31 July 1705.

[2] W.I.C. 124, From Director-General and Council to the X, 20 Mar. 1708.

By 1705 it was being proudly reported that the cotton was as beautiful as any from any part of the world.[1]

The English also took up the idea. The redoubtable Sir Dalby Thomas recommended to the Royal African Company that 'everything that thrives in the West Indies will thrive here' and requested 'all sorts of seeds to be sent from the West Indies'. Four months later he proudly reported that he had two acres of indigo growing, and that he would have twenty the following year; but this hope never materialized. According to Sir Dalby the venture failed because indigo was a common weed in the country which was used by the natives.[2] Not long afterwards he reported that the Dutch cotton and sugar plantations 'had come to nothing'. Sir Dalby's reasons for the failure of indigo plantations are unconvincing, since the project was undertaken not to satisfy African but European demand. Nor was it true that the Dutch project was bogged down by 1709.

During the remaining part of Sir Dalby's governorship the Dutch intensified the cultivation of cotton. A year before his death in 1711, two bags of cotton seeds were sent from Holland to be planted on the Gold Coast. Three years later cotton from the Gold Coast had secured a ready market in Amsterdam. Nor was indigo cultivation given up. In 1712 the Dutch dispatched an indigo planter from Curacao purposely to improve indigo cultivation on the Gold Coast,[3] but the planter did not take long to discover the flaw in the plantation system. It was not lack of goodwill on the part of the Africans, but it was impossible to cultivate the soil and export slaves at one and the same time. It was the slave trade that killed the project. The reason was that a plantation labourer on the Gold Coast, or a slave who was to be fed at the company's expense, was a better and a more profitable commodity on the hungry markets of the New World. But once the labourers were sold the plantations were obviously left shorthanded. Ironically the Dutch always complained of lack of labour for their plantations. Trade flourished but the plantations

[1] W.I.C. 917, de la Palma to the X, 10 Oct. 1703; N.B.K.G. 58/19, de la Palma to the X, June 1702. Apparently attempts at a cotton plantation had been made in the 1650s. In 1658 Valckenburg reported that he would 'advance the cotton plantation at Boutry and Axem' (10 July 1658). In 1705 General de la Palma reported that they had 'alter schoonste cottoen, dat ooijt in Oosten of in Westen valt, endie rivier van chama extreme en schoone bleekerijen zoude connen given . . .'.

[2] T70/5/64, Sir Dalby Thomas to R.A.C., 29 Oct. 1709.

[3] W.I.C. 643, From the Ten to Elmina, 30 June 1712.

died off. This was because plantations on the Gold Coast went against the interests of the West Indian colonies.

The lack of interest in the plantations is clearly demonstrated by the Royal African Company who, as a result of pressures from the West Indian planters, asked their factors on the coast not to cultivate any more cotton and sugar-cane; and although Sir Dalby Thomas was enthusiastic about cultivation, other English factors were not. They complained that 'by putting the slaves to work on planting' he had neglected the forts and castles, and had put the 'company to a great deal of charge to little purpose'.[1] With the interests of the West Indian planters against them, and the lack of support from some of the company's servants in a project whose immediate returns were doubtful and less profitable than the slave trade, the plantations died off. Thus West Africa in general, and the Gold Coast in particular, was subordinated to the interests of the New World.

On the whole, trade on the Gold Coast was profitable in spite of the frequent complaints about the fall in gold returns. Admittedly it is difficult to be certain about the exact contribution of the Gold Coast trade to the European economy. But, if the anxiety and cut-throat competition to build forts and castles are anything to go by, one cannot but conclude that the prize was great. In many cases the companies never separated their commodities regionally; therefore the number of slaves sent from the Gold Coast alone in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries may never be known. But by the end of the seventeenth century one can assert from the available Dutch and English records that each exported between 5,000 and 6,000 slaves annually. For instance, in the eight months April to December 1678 the English shipped 1,146 slaves from Cape Coast Castle. From September 1701 to April 1704 the same company's records show that a total of 2,320 slaves were carried from the Gold Coast.[2] In 1706 the English factor at Anomabo, the most important town for the slave trade, estimated that the English trade in slaves, which was 'increasing wonderfully', could be sure of 5,000 slaves per annum. This squares with the records from Cape Coast Castle, which show that in two and a half years the English purchased 10,198 slaves.[3] The figures are not markedly different from those of

[1] T70/5/37, Reflections on Sir Dalby Thomas' Conduct, July 1706.
[2] Davies, op. cit., p. 226.
[3] T70/5/31, 12 July, 1 Aug. 1707; T70/5, 19 Feb. 1706.

the Dutch, who assured the Directors of the West India Company of a regular annual supply of 6,000 slaves, if only adequate trade goods were sent to the coast. Obviously it was on account of the optimism of the factors on the Gold Coast that the Dutch agreed to supply the Portuguese with slaves in return for Brazilian tobacco, which was being used extensively to purchase slaves from West Africa.[1]

There is not doubt that at the turn of the seventeenth century the Europeans were driving a roaring trade in slaves. A slave costing 45 florins in West Africa was sold for 210 florins in the New World. Thus the 270,000 florins spent on 6,000 slaves annually fetched 1,260,000 florins. This brought a profit of 990,000 florins. When one allows that about 390,000 florins would be spent on ships and about 300 slaves who might perish in the Middle Passage, they were left a clear net profit of 600,000 florins.[2] The Brandenburgers also made about 85 per cent profit on the slave trade.

Nor were the gold takings less encouraging. Though the total amount may not be known, Bosman's estimate of the total gold export at the end of the seventeenth century may be near the correct figure. He estimated that in a good year the Europeans obtained 7,000 marks of gold from the Africans, and the Dutch, who received the greatest share, were said to have obtained about 1,500 marks annually. But the period of Bosman's stay on the coast was full of wars; hence the gold returns on the whole must have been very poor. Although too many gaps exist in the records to allow for any better estimate, the available data tend to support Bosman's figures. In the twelve months from February 1690 to January 1691 the total gold intake of the Dutch reached 2,200 marks.[3] Gold intakes, calculated from the irregular records, show that between 1699 and 1706 the Dutch collected 6,274 marks, an average of 880 marks per annum. Even the intake of ivory, which was rather difficult to obtain from the Gold Coast, was also promising. In twelve years the Dutch collected 67,299 pounds from their least-paying forts, such as Moure, Kormantse, and Sekondi.[4] In addition to all this the Gold Coast also provided lime juice, which was very much in demand in Holland and was used in the Middle Passage.

[1] W.I.C. 917/300, 4 Oct. 1704–9 June 1705; W.I.C. 463, From the X to Elmina, 19 Aug. 1717.

[2] W.I.C. 484/300, W. de la Palma to the X, 4 Oct. 1704, 9 June 1705. Debrunner, op. cit., p. 47; W.I.C. 917/50, W. de la Palma to the X, 4 Oct. 1704, 9 June 1705.

[3] W.I.C. 124, Jan. 1690–Jan. 1691.

[4] W.I.C. 124, 1705–16.

# CHAPTER III

# African–European Relations

THE seventeenth century, like the nineteenth, witnessed remarkable efforts by Europeans to establish themselves in Africa. But while the attempts of the latter century virtually embraced the whole of continental Africa, those of the former were mainly confined to West Africa. The propelling forces in the seventeenth century were mainly commercial, though this is not to say that purely political considerations were absent. In this they were unlike those of the nineteenth century, when the Industrial Revolution necessitated an expansion of old markets and the acquisition of new sources of raw materials, which, in turn, enhanced the political status of the principal European powers. In the seventeenth century the dividing line between politics and economics was very faint. If the boundaries which criss-crossed the face of Africa until the second half of the twentieth century were the permanent scars of nineteenth-century European expansion, the seventeenth century could also boast of an impressive physical legacy. On the Gold Coast coastline of less than 300 miles, twenty-one forts and castles of five different European nations commanded the roads into the interior.[1] The waving flags of the Brandenburgers, Danes, Dutch, English, and Swedes proclaimed the new acquisitions of the European companies. The efforts made by the companies to obtain and to maintain their possessions on the Guinea coast in general, and on the Gold Coast in particular, indicated the economic importance the Europeans attached to West Africa, and they were prepared to use any method to achieve their ends with the African rulers.

Both in approach and means adopted, the seventeenth century was similar to the nineteenth. The nineteenth-century treaty-makers like Stanley, Lugard, and Karl Peters had their seventeenth-century counterparts in men like de Groot, Caarlof, Crisp, and Ruychaver. Just as in the nineteenth century, it did not take long to discover that mere treaties unbacked by a show of force would not be accepted

[1] M. Nathan, 'The Dutch and the English on the Gold Coast in the Eighteenth Century', *J.A.S.* 3 (1904), 33–43.

by the contending parties. The frequent enactment and re-enactment of these treaties showed that the terms were not regularly observed. That the local rulers little esteemed these treaties is seen in the willingness with which they welcomed as many companies as possible to establish themselves on their shores. The main reasons for the non-compliance must be looked for in the different background of the Africans and Europeans.

Political and economic patterns in Europe were different from what they were in Africa. As a result the Europeans saw the African patterns in an entirely different light from what the Africans considered them to be. Their conceptions of ownership of, and title to, land, as well as their interpretations of transactions involving payments, whether in kind or in money, were all conditioned by their European environment. The African's own conceptions of land tenure and ownership, his strongly communalistic approach to life as compared with the European's individualistic way of living, meant that the relationship between the two parties would be charged with misunderstanding, mistrust, and misconception.

Throughout western Europe the seventeenth century was a period of remarkable economic growth. This was particularly noticeable in England and in the United Provinces. In the latter country the seventeenth century was the 'Golden Century'. Owing to their early monopoly of the Baltic trade, the Dutch were no strangers to the sea. Their ships were found carrying and selling in all parts of the world. The accumulation of capital from their early trading ventures gave them a great start in the early seventeenth century, and it is significant that that century saw the birth of both the East and West India companies,[1] which served as the backbone of the new long-distance trade. In the seventeenth century everything in Holland began to assume economic dimensions. Largely paid out of moneys supplied by the capitalists in the towns, there was reclamation of land and development of agriculture—in Holland and Zeeland, for instance, about 80,000 acres of land were reclaimed.[2] To pay for the capital invested and to profit by these investments, people began to adopt scientific methods in order to achieve the maximum results. In a place like the United Provinces where a living had to be made by wresting land from the sea by means of dykes and polders, land could not be owned on a communal basis.

[1] Barbour, op. cit., pp. 14–16.

[2] S. B. Clough, C. W. Cole, *Economic History of Europe* (Boston, 1952), p. 193.

Similarly England witnessed a series of agrarian changes prior to, and during, the seventeenth century, and the result was that payment in money came to supersede payments in kind. In the course of time some poor farmers were displaced from their holdings, and the problem of the landless increased with the system of enclosures, which was a necessary corollary to the monied economy. Shut up within the confines of his new farm the landlord developed the land on his own lines. There was much land speculation by rich merchants and industrialists.

It may be seen that in both the United Provinces and in England, land, like all the other aspects of economic life, had become a good field for investment. Individuals, as well as companies, who invested money in land possessed complete control over their properties. They could, and did, alienate their titles as often as it was economically profitable. The individual landlord could dispose of his right to his land in the same way as he was entitled to treat any of his personal properties. But this idea of the individual landholder with absolute rights over his land was contrary to the African concept of land tenure.

In many parts of Africa land was, and still is, communally owned. This does not mean that every member of the society had an equal right to every piece of the society's land. But every member of the community possessed a right by virtue of his membership of the community to be given land on which he could work privately for his own use. On the whole there was nothing like an individual ownership of land. On the Gold Coast the prevailing conception of land was succinctly summed up by a chief as ownership 'by a vast family of whom many are dead, a few are living, and countless hosts are still unborn'.[1] This is further illustrated by Rattray's observation that the soil was regarded as 'a deity, a goddess who could neither be bought nor sold'.[2]

It is true that in Africa land could be corporately or privately owned, but this was never in the same way as it obtained in Europe. On the Gold Coast title to land is vested in the community, and its absolute ownership is symbolized in the stool. Theoretically land is owned by the chief or the head of a family, who acts merely as a trustee for the whole community. Although in most places in Africa

[1] Nana Sir Ofori Atta, quoted by N. A. Ollenu, *Principles of Customary Land Law* (London, 1962), p. 5.

[2] Rattray, *Ashanti Law and Constitution*, p. 342.

land is allotted by the paramount chief to his sub-chiefs, who may be regarded as having primary holdings, these in turn give secondary holdings to the family heads, who also subdivide them into tertiary holdings among the members of the family. Every member of the family had the right to farm any portion of the land that had not been cultivated by someone else. All holders of the land had to perform some customary obligations to their immediate superior and to the chief in accordance with customary law.[1]

Once a piece of land had been cultivated, the individual remained in possession of it even if the land had been allowed to revert to bush. But it must be pointed out that, in the African sense, ownership of that piece did not go beyond the things that had accrued to him by his labour. The individual possesses the right in, and over, a thing or piece of land, but not the right to the land itself. The land and all that are beneath it are owned by the family and the whole community.

An interesting aspect of land ownership is the kind of title which is acquired by a stranger. Although titles to land could be alienated, this transaction could, on the Gold Coast at least, only be undertaken between two states. What the individual could alienate of his own free will was his determinable ownership of the piece of land which he had been given. When a stranger therefore purchases or rents land, he only comes into possession of the use of the land. When such a transaction takes place, the stranger enjoys all the rights and duties of a citizen. But he may not be able to take part in all customary ceremonies, and may have his duties commuted to payment in kind, for it may be undesirable and even 'sacrilegious for such a person to take active part in such customary rights'.[2] This aspect of African land tenure caused many difficulties in the relations between the Africans and the Europeans. The Europeans not unnaturally acted under the misconception that the chiefs owned the land. In many cases African chiefs in return for gifts granted concessions to Europeans by which the latter were allowed to settle or to build forts in their territory. But this did not in any way give the Europeans any fundamental rights to the land. Whatever payments the Europeans

[1] Max Gluckman, *The Judicial Process among the Barotse of Northern Rhodesia* (Manchester, 1955), pp. 1–30; 'Lozi Land Tenure', *Rhodes–Livingstone Papers* (1943) no. 10, pp. 7 ff.; D. W. Conroy, 'The General Principles of Land Tenure', ibid., (1948), no. 14, pp. 90 ff.; Ollenu, op. cit., p. 52.

[2] Ollenu, op. cit., p. 50; Gluckman, 'Lozi Land and Royal Property', *Rhodes–Livingstone Papers* (1943), no. 10, p. 41.

might have made were only part payment for customary service due to the chiefs.

An equally interesting aspect is the position of immigrants. It was not unknown for the Portuguese and the Dutch to claim overlordship to parts of the Gold Coast on the grounds that they had been inhabited by Elmina fishermen.[1] Whilst such claims could easily be made along ill-defined boundaries, it is difficult to understand how a few immigrants could create pockets of independent states within other states.

The basic differences between the Europeans and Africans in their conceptions of land tenure and ownership became evident when the Portuguese first arrived on the Gold Coast. In the Congo they undertook a friendly mission with the view of helping a friendly potentate. But in the Gold Coast the exact relationship that was first established between them and the rulers has not yet been found out. However, the surviving documents do not show sufficient circumstantial evidence to postulate a claim that the local rulers on the coast were initially accorded respect as equals. When the Portuguese decided to erect a permanent fortress on the coast, they first sought a formal permission from the local ruler of Fetu. Previous to the establishment of the castle, they had conducted trade in their ships. Whatever their intentions in deciding on the building of the castle, they soon realized that they had underestimated the opposition of the local people. Obviously by painting a rosy picture of the splendours of Portugal, and by dwelling on the benefits of a closer association between the African king and the king of Portugal, d'Azambuja, the leader of the expedition, expected the local chief, Kwamina Ansa (Caramansa), to jump at the idea. In this he was disappointed. A wise judge of the problems of human relationships, Ansa, who rightly envisaged dissension between the Africans and Europeans, advised that:

> . . . because the spirit of such a noble people would scarcely endure the poverty and simplicity of that savage land of Guiné, quarrels and passions might arise between them all. . . . Friends who met occasionally remained better friends than if they were neighbours on account of the nature of human heart—for it resembled the waves of the sea, which, breaking upon a rock barring their path, were tossed up to the sky, so that a double mischief was done, the sea being churned to fury, and the rock, its neighbour, being damaged.[2]

[1] O.W.I.C. 7, Deductie van Valckenburg, 1656; O.W.I.C. 13, Valckenburg to Kruisensten, 5 Sept. 1656; de Jonge, op. cit., p. 64.

[2] Blake, *Europeans in West Africa* i. 64; C. R. Crone, ed., *Hakluyt Society*, 2nd series, 80 (London, 1937), p. 121.

Despite Kwamina Ansa's reluctance, it was unthinkable that the carefully prepared Portuguese plans should be abandoned on account of such verbal opposition. To them their newly discovered source of gold should be protected through thick and thin. And so the work was finally finished 'despite much trouble with the negroes'.[1] Because of the opposition that the Portuguese encountered, the village was burnt down as a lesson for the Africans; but after the building of the castle it was necessary for the Portuguese to establish a better and workable relationship with the Africans. Although the Portuguese were able to stay on the Gold Coast for a long time their relations with the local people were, on the whole, never as cordial as they were with the people in upper Guinea. On the Gold Coast they resorted to force and fraud as against the peaceful miscegenation and penetration that characterized their stay in upper Guinea.[2]

But however much they had wished to disregard African views, local conditions made it difficult for the Portuguese to have their own way; and so despite their initial show of force, it was they who initiated the practice whereby regular tributes were paid to local chiefs. During the governorship of d'Azambuja, he was said to have 'made other ordinances and agreements with the negroes'. These agreements, no doubt, formed the basis of the customary payments to the kings of Eguafo (Komenda) and Fetu, on whose land Elmina, 'the village of two parts',[3] stood. Subsequent governors continued to pay the tributes regularly. In 1503, for instance, one Diogo d'Alvarenga was sent with presents to the king of Eguafo. The 'knights of Fetu' were also given presents, ostensibly to 'advance the service of the king of Portugal'. All the European traders who followed the Portuguese entered into agreements of one form or another with local rulers.

Tributes to local potentates were not all. Against both external and internal attacks the Europeans counted on local support. From the initial stages they realized the need of a trained and reliable force. To achieve this they adopted a policy of detribalization with the people who settled around their forts. They severed Elmina's dependence on the rulers of Fetu and Eguafo and made it an independent municipality ruled by local headmen, who came to

[1] Pereira, *Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis*, *c.* 1505–8. Trans. and ed. Kimble, *Hakluyt Society*, 2nd series, 79, p. 120; Blake, *Europeans in West Africa*, i. 54.

[2] Blake, op. cit., p. 43.

[3] Dapper, op. cit., p. 283; Blake, op. cit., p. 45.

depend more on the Portuguese. In return for protection, the Elmina people remained faithful to their new masters. In 1625, for instance, it was the spirited resistance offered by the local people that prevented the castle from falling into the hands of the Dutch. It was not until the Dutch had succeeded in winning the friendship of a counterbalancing local force that they were able to capture Elmina Castle in 1637.[1]

While the friendship of the coastal people provided protection for the Portuguese, the goodwill of the inland rulers was also necessary to ensure a regular flow of trade to the coast. The Portuguese were not long in learning to cultivate the friendship of the inland people. It became a regular feature of their trade for newly arrived governors to send presents to the king of Akani.[2] This was found necessary because Akani controlled the gold trade. Such regular presents would induce the ruler to persuade his traders to trade with the Portuguese. From the early beginnings, therefore, the Portuguese saw that successful trade on the Gold Coast depended on the degree of trust that existed between the Europeans and the Africans. It was the abandonment of such trust that was later to cost them their possessions on the Guinea coast. Reduced to desperate straits by the activities of interlopers, and by the fierce competition of companies of other nations, the Portuguese resorted to naked force to maintain their control. It was not unknown for them to send armed galleys to the coast to burn both the canoes and houses of recalcitrant towns. It was such an ungenerous policy towards the Asebu that helped the cause of the Dutch. But in many respects the Dutch adopted methods as high-handed as the Portuguese before them.

If any company was quick at staking its 'legitimate' claims to places on the Gold Coast in the seventeenth century, it was the Dutch West India Company. On many occasions it was claimed that by their defeat of the Portuguese they had come into rightful possession of all places where the Portuguese formerly exercised sovereignty. Whether such sovereignty had ever been exercised was a question for which the Dutch alone seem to have had an answer. Whenever it suited them they produced oral evidence to support

[1] de Jonge, op. cit., p. 18; W. W. Claridge, *A History of the Gold Coast and Ashanti*, 2 vols. (London, 1915), i. 89.

[2] Blake, *Europeans in West Africa* i. 45. The English adopted a similar method, see T70/370/14, July 1684.

their claims. In November 1656, for instance, they managed to get the headmen of lower and upper Axim to assert that 'from time immemorial the lands stretching from Assine to Axim had been under the vassalage of the Portuguese'.[1] It is therefore surprising that the same Dutch people who had been so ready to bolster their claims in the seventeenth century could not find the basis for their possessions on the Gold Coast in the nineteenth century. This, understandably, was when the presence of the Asante ambassador, Akyeampong, at Elmina was embarrassing the Dutch, who were negotiating the transfer of their unprofitable possession to the British. The negotiation had broken down because of the opposition which the British feared they might encounter from the Asante.[2]

Little is known of the relationship between the Dutch and the people with whom they traded on the coast in the sixteenth century. It is said that they entered into a treaty agreement with the Asebu in 1598. The exact terms of this agreement have not been discovered. Judging from subsequent agreements, however, it appears that it was nothing but an undertaking on the part of Asebu to trade only with the Dutch. Although Asebu was the first state in which the Dutch gained a footing, it was not until the latter part of the seventeenth century that a definite agreement was signed. Until 1656, when Dutch relations with the Asebu were defined, there was only an informal alliance between the two.

The first extant contract was made with the Braffo of Fante. In 1624 General Amersfoot, on behalf of the States-General, signed a treaty with Ambro, Braffo of Fante. The most important clause held that the Fante should help the Dutch to defeat the Portuguese.[3] A year later, apparently helped by their new allies, the Dutch made a disastrous attempt to capture Elmina Castle. The simplicity of this treaty is not surprising, since the main preoccupation of the Dutch before 1637 was how to defeat the Portuguese. Before the capture of the Portuguese stronghold, the Dutch were so unsure of their position on the Gold Coast that they sought advice from the Directors of the company on how to deal with both Africans and Europeans. This is noticeable from a series of questions they sent

[1] O.W.I.C. 13, ff. 432–7, Bewijs van der landen Axime of Axems Jurisdictie, 25 Nov. 1656.

[2] For the circumstances leading to the final withdrawal of the Dutch from the Gold Coast see Coombs, *The Gold Coast, Britain and the Netherlands.*

[3] N.B.K.G. 222, f. 314, Agreement between Ambro, Braffo of Fante and General Amersfoot, 31 Mar. 1624. For the full text see Appendix II.

to Holland in 1633. They wanted to find out the extent of their jurisdiction on the coast. It was claimed that agreements, either oral or written, had been made with a number of states, including Asebu, Fante, and Accra. In the light of such agreements, they wanted to know whether they were to oppose the French and the English when they made overtures of friendship to those states.[1]

The document next touched on the relations with the local people. Had the company any right to forbid the merchants of Moure and people living in other towns to trade with the English and the French? From the little information that the document affords it is clear that the Dutch were uncertain of the powers that their agreements conferred on them. Above all, it is evident that the two contracting parties were not observing the terms of the agreement in the same sense. As far as the Dutch were concerned, their subsequent behaviour towards some of these states showed that they had either forgotten, or chosen to ignore, their former agreements. When an agreement was made in 1638 with the king of Accra, there was no reference to the previous agreement of 1633, nor was anything said about any agreement having been made at all in the 1630s in another agreement made in 1642. As regards Dutch claims to Fante, the 1624 agreement appears to have given them no special privileges. Despite this agreement, it was not until 1638 that they obtained permission to build a lodge at Anomabo.[2] The fact that Arent de Groot easily succeeded in obtaining a foothold in Fante for the English in 1632 shows that the local people set little or no store by the 1624 treaty.

Everything considered, one may conclude that the purpose of the 1633 document was to determine how far the States-General would assist the company on the Gold Coast. Serious claims to the coast were to await the arrival of many European companies. It then became necessary that each contending party should bolster up its claim with proper treaties. Since up to 1642 Dutch attempts were concentrated on ousting the Portuguese from their entrenched position on the Gold Coast, it is no wonder that they concentrated their activities mainly on the region west of Asebu. Except for the 1642 Accra treaty, all the extant treaties were made with the states of the western coast.

In 1642 the last stronghold of the Portuguese fell with the capture

[1] Extract from the registrar of the States-General, f. 191, 16 Aug. 1632; Cousins, op. cit., p. 85.

[2] O.W.I.C. 11, 16 Oct. 1638; de Jonge, op. cit., p. 64.

of Fort Saint Anthony at Axim. Contrary to claims often put forward by the Dutch, the defeat by itself did not give them any control of the people of Axim. If anything, it merely afforded them an opportunity of direct contact with the local people. Since there were no other serious competitors at that time, the Dutch were able to persuade the Africans to enter into an agreement with them. Among other things the agreement with Axim in 1642 stipulated that all properties of the Portuguese should be handed over to the Dutch. The people were to consider themselves enemies of the Portuguese. No trade was to be carried on with any other nationals without the express permission of the Dutch. The Axim people were to pay the Dutch a fish tax of one-fifth of their catch. All cases, criminal and civil, were to be submitted to a court of which the Dutch Governor at Axim was to be president. Fines were to be shared between the Dutch and the elders. However, the elders were to be paid an ounce of gold for every ship that came from Holland. They were also to enjoy a commission on the amount of gold that was bought from Axim.[1]

Other equally interesting treaties were those signed with the rulers of Accra, Eguafo, and Jabi. The Accra treaty was signed by representatives of the Dutch Director-General and King Ochi (Okai). By this treaty the village of Little Accra was ceded to the Dutch for the erection of a fort. For granting them the privilege the king was paid goods valued at £72 and, thereafter, was to receive two ounces of gold per month.[2] In the Eguafo agreement of the same year, the Dutch received compensation from the king and his elders for the murder of an Elmina woman. The king and his elders also promised not to allow any other European nationals to build a lodge or a fort in their state, not even the French, from whom they had already received money. Dutch traders and their servants were to be well treated. In return the Dutch promised to see to it that their trade was carried on in the town, and not on the roads, as it had been. They also promised not to allow themselves to be drawn into the war between Eguafo and Adom. All ships that arrived in the state were to pay taxes to the king and his elders.[3]

[1] O.W.I.C. 12, Agreement between General Ruychaver and Caboceers of Axim, 17 Feb. 1642.

[2] O.W.I.C. 12, Contract between the Dutch and Ochi, king of Accra; Accra, 20 Aug. 1642.

[3] O.W.I.C. 13/63, N.B.K.G. 222/44, Contract between Ruychaver and the king of Aguafo, n.d., not signed.

The last of the series of treaties made during the generalship of Ruychaver was that of Jabi and Shama. This agreement appears to have been made after a period of quarrels between the Dutch and the Shama people. Baqua Quita, the king, agreed with Laurens Fiddelman and Hendrick Foren, on behalf of the Director-General, that all quarrels and disagreements should be forgotten except that the captain of Shama and a man called Visser were to be banished from the town. It was also agreed that those who collected taxes on fish should not be molested, but should be freely allowed to collect the usual one-fifth part of the fish; and that the *Tie Ties* should not on any trivial excuse be called in to close down the paths from the interior. People from Elmina were to be allowed to pursue their trade in peace. Finally the kings of Jabi and Shama promised to abide by the terms of the treaty; if they defaulted in any way they were to be punished as an example to all.[1]

It is interesting to note the close similarity between all the contracts made during the time of General Ruychaver. They all give sufficient evidence of the interdependence that was growing between the Africans and the Europeans. In all the treaties the rulers were to be paid an amount of gold for granting permission to the Europeans either to trade or build in their states. It was specifically stated that the king of Accra, for example, was to be paid two ounces of gold every month. Although the reason for these payments is not given, there is no doubt that they were the rents for the pieces of land on which the Dutch forts were built, for the other rulers were to receive tolls on ships that traded in their state. True, the fact that some payments were described as gifts instead of being simply called rents tended to obscure the main purpose of these payments. Not infrequently people described the payments as mere incentives for trade. Although giving presents was an important part of successful commerce on the Gold Coast, such gifts did not supersede what the local rulers received in recognition of their rights over the lands on which the European forts stood.

It may also be argued that by paying a toll on their fish the local rulers relinquished their sovereign rights to the European. The same argument may be cited as an explanation for the fact that in places

[1] N.B.K.G. 222/48–9, Contract with the king of Jabi, 1643. The original contract in O.W.I.C. 12 has no date. It is likely that the date 1643 is a mistake, since the group of agreements were supposed to have been made between 1641 and 1642.

such as Axim and Elmina the European governors were given the right to preside over judicial matters. The origins of the payment of tolls are not clear. Later on, the Dutch used the payment to show their undisputed rights of sovereignty over states that paid them. Judging from the records, however, it appears that the Dutch inherited the practice from their Portuguese predecessors. These tolls might have originated as contributions towards the defence and protection given by the Europeans.[1] That some of the African rulers allowed the Europeans to preside over their courts was nothing strange. This practice stemmed from the assumption that the Europeans, being uninterested parties, would be impartial arbiters. But at a later date the Europeans were to interpret it differently. Despite some anomalies in the Ruychavian treaties, their importance should not be underestimated. They served as the bases for subsequent treaties. They were simple because in the early stages the Europeans could not afford to be too insistent on their own point of view. Treaties became much more complicated after 1650, when European competition became keener.

In the second half of the seventeenth century the European companies started pushing their claims to as far back in time as possible to show a better claim than rival claimants. When the Dutch renewed their treaty with Accra in 1649, both sides agreed to observe the terms of the 1642 agreement. In addition the king and his elders promised not to allow any other company to trade in their state. Anybody who infringed the terms of the agreement was to have his goods impounded and shared equally between the king and the Dutch. As was the normal practice, the Dutch freely distributed presents, valued at about £260, to the king and his elders. Perhaps it was on account of the large amount of presents given that, in 1656, the Dutch mistakenly claimed to have bought the coast of Accra.[2]

On the Gold Coast it soon became evident that treaties alone could not form the bases for claims to any particular place. At best, the Africans interpreted them as agreements which only gave the Europeans a share in their trade. They never considered granting

[1] O.W.I.C. 13/432, Vassalage of Axim, 25 Nov. 1656. O.W.I.C. 12, Agreement with Jumore, 16 Jan. 1657.

[2] O.W.I.C. 12, N.B.K.G. 222, Agreement between J. van d. Wel and the king of Accra, 4 Aug. 1649. The English clearly made a distinction between mere gifts and customary payments. In May 1702 the presents of brandy, coral, cloths, and spirits given to the king of Akwamu were for his 'gratuity for his civility in permitting a settlement at Allampo'. See T70/377, 13 May.

them any monopoly rights. The Europeans were not long in realizing that their claims would only be respected if they backed them with force. It was too much to expect the Africans to confine themselves to one company when there were several other who offered them better prospects. It did not take them long to learn that prices would fall if they withheld their commodities till the arrival of other European traders. The Akani traders, who controlled more than two-thirds of the inland gold, were the first to adopt the practice.[1] Many others soon followed suit. In Axim for instance, despite the 1642 agreement, the Dutch soon lost any control they exercised to the English. By 1647 Dutch–Axim relations had so deteriorated that Dutch ships could safely land at Axim only by flying the English flag[2] to deceive the people.

There were many reasons why the Africans refused to be bound by the treaties. Apart from the rents collected from the Europeans, there was also a certain amount of prestige to be associated with the building of European forts in one's state. But above all the Europeans themselves showed little or no respect for the claims of their rivals. In addition to outright deceit—as the Dutch practised on Axim in 1647—all the Europeans implicitly acted on the principle that as owners of the land the African could do as they pleased with it. Of course this principle was adopted when it suited their own particular interests. When, for instance, the French protested against Dutch activities at Komenda in 1639, the latter lightly dismissed their claims on the grounds that the land belonged to the king of Eguafo, and not to the king of France.[3] When a similar protest was lodged by the Swedes in 1657, the Dutch again remonstrated that, as independent people, the Ahanta could allow anybody to trade at Boutry. And yet these same Dutch were quick in attacking the Africans when Dutch privileges were threatened by Africans' insistence on their rights.

Another reason that led the African rulers to adopt a policy of free trade was their contention that custom expected them to provide hospitality and protection for all strangers. This is well illustrated by the behaviour of the ruler of Fante. Disgusted at the importunities of the Dutch that he should refuse permission for others to trade or

[1] O.W.I.C. 11, From Guinea to the XIX, 21 Oct. 1645; Ratelband, op. cit., p. 43.

[2] O.W.I.C. 11, From van de Wel to the XIX, Aug. 1647.

[3] O.W.I.C. 13, van Iperen to the XIX, 1 July 1639. N.B.K.G. 222, Reply of Valckenburg to the Swedes, Feb. 1657.

to build in his state, he indicated that the Fante were not prepared to forgo their control of the state. He expressed this in his own phraseology by asserting that he was prepared to marry two white wives and love each equally dearly.[1] Similarly in 1659 the king of Accra made it plain to the Dutch that he would not drive anybody from his state. On the contrary, he was prepared to welcome all who desired to trade with his people. This strong insistence on their rights became a characteristic feature with some of the rulers. At the beginning of the eighteenth century all efforts by the Dutch and the English to get Akafany, the king of Assini, to drive away the French were unavailing. Akafany refused to be a party to their scheme on the grounds that the French were his guests. Anyhow, he could not visualize the Dutch alone being able to control the trade on the whole of the Gold Coast.[2]

The ineffectiveness of the treaties was also due to the fact that national loyalties sat lightly on some officials who came to the Gold Coast. Some frequently changed their allegiance from one company to another. One typical example was Arent de Groot, who secured Anomabo for the English. Since he had already been to the Gold Coast in the service of the Dutch, he was well aware of the methods likely to win African support. He also knew how the Europeans behaved on the coast. It is therefore not strange that he chose to come first to the Fante, who had always shown their resentment of any external control. That the Dutch had prior claims to the place did not deter him, although he might have been aware of the Dutch–Fante agreement of 1624. De Groot lamely argued that the fact that a Dutch ship followed him to dissuade the Fante from permitting any concessions on their land indicated that the Dutch were uncertain of their claims.[3] De Groot's method was not an isolated event on the Gold Coast. It appears that from the early beginnings the Europeans convinced themselves that the most binding principle in relations with the Africans was the capacity to maintain one's privileges and to sustain the goodwill of the Africans. They conceded

[1] N.B.K.G. 81, Interrogations . . . king of Accra, 2 Feb. 1659. In 1707 the people of Takoradi told the Dutch that 'the ground belonged to neither the Dutch nor the English but either could pay for any oyster shells needed', see T70/5/52, Sir Dalby Thomas to R.A.C., 25 Apr.

[2] N.B.K.G. 69/6, A Journey by W. de la Palma to the River Ankobra, 14 Oct., 10 Nov. 1702.

[3] O.W.I.C. 11, Report from Fort Nasau to the XIX, 1 July 1634. V.W.I.S. 1162, Protest of Arent de Groot on behalf of the English, 26 Aug. 1640.

the point that the Africans could change their alliance at their own pleasure. De Groot himself soon realized that the Fante would not grant him any exclusive privilege. His claim to the whole coastline between Anomabo and Kormantse was made hollow when other Europeans were granted similar concessions. In 1650 Hendrick Caarlof, another veteran Dutch servant now in the service of the Swedish African Company, arrived on the Gold Coast. By 1655, due to his efforts, the Swedes had established themselves at Cape Coast, Anomabo, Osu, Takoradi, and Jumore.[1]

Caarlof was determined to eliminate all competitors from Cape Coast. To achieve this he fell back on his previous experience. This is clearly noticed when one examines a treaty he concluded with the Fetu in 1655. In this treaty the king, Boodema, and his chief minister, Hennequa (Ahenakwa), ceded the coast to the Swedish company to 'build forts, lodges and houses'. After promising to pay the usual tolls on ships which went with such concessions, a clause was inserted that, to all intents and purposes, was calculated to undermine the English. This stipulated that the English should be allowed to retain their fort at Cape Coast for six months, after which period they were to seek permission from the Swedes if they intended to stay any longer.[2] This was a stipulation that Caarlof knew would not be respected by the English. In his determination to establish Swedish claims at Fetu, Caarlof, like many others before and after him, also underlined the part to be played by the Africans in future negotiations with other companies.

Before the arrival of the Swedes, the English and the Dutch had been the main contestants for the favours of the Fetu. The English success in gaining a foothold there was a real threat to the Dutch. This was because Cape Coast was sandwiched in between the Dutch possessions at Moure and Elmina. To preserve their hold in the area, the Dutch felt it was necessary to dislodge the English. It is, however, difficult to understand how the Dutch expected the Fetu to support them. It must be remembered that the Dutch themselves had already abandoned the place on the plea that it was too near their other two possessions. This decision dissatisfied the traders at Cape Coast, who resented not only the journey to and from Moure and Elmina, but also the neglect that their town suffered. They therefore deter-

[1] O.W.I.C. 7, Deductie van Valckenburg 1656.

[2] N.B.K.G. 222/330–12, Agreement between H. Caarlof and Bodema, king of Fetu, 1650.

mined to oppose the Dutch, who used all methods to frighten them. The Dutch resorted to the use of economic pressure and the outright force that had characterized the Portuguese. They first threatened to move all their trade from Elmina to Moure. In such a case the king of Fetu would lose the rent due him from Elmina Castle.[1] Although the king gave in to the Dutch threats, the English eventually obtained a foothold at Cape Coast. This was due to the support they obtained from the two influential local merchants, John Ahenakwa and John Claessen.

An equally weighty reason for non-compliance with the terms of the treaties was the failure of the Europeans to fulfil their promises. In the course of the seventeenth century some of the weaker states began to look up to the Europeans to protect them against their enemies. To such people the surest sign that the Europeans would not fail them was the erection of a strong fort or castle. When for economic reasons only small lodges were built, this at times provided good reasons for the Africans to look for new allies. In 1656, when the Swedes failed to help the Ahanta in their war with Encassar (Sefwi), they quickly transferred their friendship to the Dutch, who themselves lost their privileges to the Brandenburgers in 1685.[2] Thus the principle of effective occupation, which was adopted by the European powers in the nineteenth century, was gradually being applied on the Gold Coast in the seventeenth century.

At times some African states questioned the basis of European claims to exercise control over them. In 1657, for instance, the king and elders of Asebu, the oldest allies of the Dutch, refused to be controlled by the Dutch, who regarded them as their vassals. To even out the misunderstandings, an agreement was reached in 1657. Apparently, as was stated in the preamble to the agreement, the Dutch claims were based on the help given the Asebu in the Portuguese era. To ensure that the terms of the agreement would be observed, the king and his elders handed over hostages to the Dutch.[3] This brought peace between the two sides for thirty-one years, after which the agreement was renewed. The 1688 agreement reaffirmed the terms of the first one. In addition the king was to be

[1] O.W.I.C. 11/45, J. v.d. Wel to the XIX, 25–9 Nov. 1646; Ratelband, op. cit., pp. 276–9.

[2] N.B.K.G. 222/201, Valckenburg to P. Kruisensten, 16 Dec. 1656. N.B.K.G. 222/260, Vassalage to Ahanta, 27 Aug. 1656. C. W. Welman, *The Native States of the Gold Coast* (London, 1930), p. 24.

[3] O.W.I.C. 12/58, Contract made with the king of Sabu, 21 Mar. 1667.

paid £2 every month. In October payment was to be made in 'Zayes and Brandy'. The two contracting parties promised mutual assistance to each other.[1]

It is interesting that the agreement specified that, at a certain time, the Dutch should pay their rents in specific goods. One wonders whether at times the Europeans, in fulfilling such agreements, did not obscure their true significance by merely describing them as gifts or presents. There were and still are festivals held annually at different times in many places, on which occasions every member of the community contributed towards the cost of the celebrations. The festivities comprised dancing and merry-making, as well as the renewal of the bonds between the living and the dead. Theoretically the rulers were expected to entertain their visitors on a lavish scale. In actual practice, however, it was the people who bore the expenses, through the tributes and presents made to the chiefs. It was a common practice to ask people to contribute specific items according to their geographical environment or their profession. The regular payments that the Europeans made during such periods, therefore, were nothing but their expected contribution made in accordance with customary law. All the resident Europeans were expected to fulfil such obligations. Unlike the Dutch, the English clearly differentiated between ground rents and the customary contributions.

At the annual Fetu festivals the Europeans sent a delegation to the king's court at Abora, a few miles inland, to take part in the celebrations. During the period special days were set aside for the king and his elders to settle all appeals from the outlying districts. At times the European representatives took part in the deliberations.[2] In 1690, for instance, twenty-two gallons of brandy were given out to the king of Fetu,[3] and although the reasons were not given, they may

[1] V.W.I.S. 1169, Agreement between N. Sweerts and Ampe Abban, representing King Enpeteir of Sabu, 17 Feb. 1688. There were other payments made for specific reasons. In Sept. 1683 the English gave presents to the Dey, King, and other important people of Fetu. These were made up of brandy, spirits, and perpetts. They were 'dashee' as customary at dancing time. T70/369/8, Sept. 1683. In the same year brandy was sent to the king and elders of Eguafo because it was 'customary at putting the corne into the ground'. T70/368/95, 28 Mar. 1683. Müller has an interesting description of Europeans being carried 'in hammocks' to Fetu city in September for annual festival. See Birmingham, 'Fetu', *G.N.Q.* 9 (1966).

[2] T70/386, From Cape Coast to R.A.C., 22 June 1681.

[3] T70/169/34, Cape Coast Castle Abstract, 21 Jan. 1685.

have been the same as when the king of Eguafo received a gift in 1683. His present, consisting of brandy and perpetuans, was in fulfilment of 'the agreement at dancing times for the settling of the factory at Komenda'. Whilst in May 1674 the king of Fetu was given pieces of cloth as payment on three ships which came to Cape Coast, seven years later the king received 24½ yards of scarlet cloth as customs duty on two English ships. At times they allowed several months to elapse before collecting the rents in order to have a large sum of money to purchase many European goods. In 1687 the Dey of Fetu received £160 'for seven months ground rent for Cape Coast' Castle at six ounces per month;[1] and in the same year the English gave out three and a half dozen knives to the king as a 'dashy, it being usual for cutting corn'.[2] It was an accepted practice among the Africans for all able-bodied people to help with the cultivation and harvest of the king's farms. On such occasions people who were unable to attend in person could always have their services commuted to payment either in cash or in kind, as the English did at this particular period.

The exact relationships between the inland states and the Europeans are not easy to define. Like the Portuguese before them, all the Europeans sought in various ways, and with varying success, to cultivate the friendship of the inland states. There were obvious reasons. As Bosman and the other seventeenth-century writers correctly pointed out, the Europeans did not, like the Spanish in the New World, control the sources of the gold. It was therefore necessary that those who controlled the sources of the commodities should be induced to trade with them. States like Denkyira, Akwamu, Asante, and Akyem, which became powerful in the course of the seventeenth century, could easily disorganize trade. It was therefore as important, if not more so, to seek their goodwill as it was to be on good terms with the coastal states. Indeed the inland traders were much more powerful than those at the coast. When therefore they promised help to the Europeans the idea was welcomed. This may be seen from the respect and favourable consideration which Akwamu got from the Dutch at the beginning of the eighteenth century. In 1703, in return for a promise to allow the inland traders to pass unmolested through his state to the coast, King Akonno of Akwamu

[1] T70/369, 11 July 1683. See Appendix I.

[2] T70/372/194, 12 Mar. 1687. The goods were made up of zayes, gunpowder, boysadoes, perpetts, iron bars, brandy, and muskets.

was in turn promised 100 armed men, 300 pounds weight of gunpowder, and 300 pounds of bullets by the Dutch. Perhaps it was the events leading to the final signing of the agreement that well illustrate the deference with which the king was regarded. Ordinarily the Europeans dispatched their trusted African servants on diplomatic and business missions into the interior. But in this particular instance two Dutch officials from Accra had to go to the court of Akwamu to persuade the king to come to the coast. That such an agreement was beneficial to both sides may be seen from what Akwamu was able to do for the Dutch. When in 1706 messengers from the king of Allada (Ardra) came to Akwamu to request that Akonno should send to collect his annual tribute, Akwamu got Allada to promise that the Dutch would be allowed to trade unmolested in their country.[1]

Another equally influential state was Denkyira, which controlled the inland states in the south-western Gold Coast. The exact nature of the relationship between the coastal states and Denkyira is not known. It is, however, commonly believed that Denkyira once captured the 'Elmina Note' from the Eguafo (Komenda). On the strength of it, the king of Denkyira is said to have collected the ground rent for the castle from the Dutch. The origin and significance of the 'Note' came up when the Asante king, Kofi Karikari, claimed that his great ancestor, Osei Tutu, received 'the Book' from the Denkyira after the Asante–Denkyira war. The king asserted that from that time the Asante had been paid the rent for Elmina Castle.[2] It is clear that the Asantehene's claims have helped to sustain the current opinion that the Elmina Note formed the basis of Dutch friendship with Denkyira. The same argument is used to explain the close allegiance that later developed between the Asante and the people of Elmina in the subsequent centuries.

It is true that before the fall of the Denkyira empire at the beginning of the eighteenth century it was the most important single state controlling the trade to the forts on the windward coast. It is, however, difficult to accept the contention that the Denkyira were ever paid the ground rent for Elmina Castle or for any of the forts

[1] N.B.K.G. 90, From P. Nuyts to the IX, 25 May 1706.

[2] Bowdich, *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee*, pp. 76–81; Dupuis, *Journal of a Residence in Ashantee*, p. 131; F. C. Fuller, *A Vanished Dynasty: Ashanti* (London, 1921), p. 18; A. B. Ellis, *History of the Gold Coast of West Africa*, pp. 270–3; Claridge, op. cit. i. 198; Reindorf, op. cit., p. 59; Ward, op. cit., p. 122; Fage, *Ghana*, pp. 55, 103, 63 n.

on the coast. Events immediately before and after the Asante–Denkyira war do not lend support to the popular view. The assertion that Denkyira was paid the rents for Elmina Castle presupposes its control over Eguafo, for, by the end of the seventeenth century, the king of Eguafo had subjugated the whole of Fetu. As a result Eguafo claimed the sole right to collect what had hitherto been paid to both rulers. As the Notes came to confer many benefits on those who possessed them, they were only parted with after defeats. To possess the Elmina Note, therefore, the Denkyira would have had to fight the Eguafo. But there is no evidence to show that Denkyira ever aimed at becoming a coastal power. It is true that in 1698 the Denkyira king, Ntim Gyakari, was anxious that there should be political stability in Eguafo state, and so sent messengers to the English 'to be informed into the reason for deposing the king of Aguaffo'.[1] It is significant to note that this happened during the Dutch–Komenda war, in which the English and many coastal states got themselves involved. The records do not include Eguafo among the states that anxiously wished for Denkyira's downfall in order that they might regain their independence. Nor does d'Anville's map of the Gold Coast show the power of Denkyira as extending over Eguafo.

It is also difficult to understand why the Dutch only were said to have paid ground rents to Denkyira. If the latter had been the overlords of Eguafo, then they would have been expected to receive payment, not only from Elmina, but from Komenda, where both the Dutch and the English had forts. The English too should have paid rent to Denkyira. On the contrary, all the available records show that the English never paid anything to Denkyira, but always paid the king of Eguafo.

What then was the origin and nature of Denkyira's relationship with the Dutch? In fact there is much circumstantial evidence to show that the two were on friendly terms. The behaviour of the Dutch immediately after the Asante victory over Denkyira in 1701 clearly illustrates this. Before the Asante could return home, the Dutch found it necessary to clarify their position with Denkyira and to hasten to express their support for the victorious Asante. In July 1701 they accepted a suggestion put forward by Aijensim (Agyensam), king of Assin, to undertake 'a hitherto unheard of enterprise', namely, to send the sub-factor David van Nyendaal

[1] T70/374, Cape Coast Castle Journal, 2 Nov. 1698.

on a mission to 'the much feared Assjantie Caboceer Zaay'. The envoy, who was ostensibly loaded with presents to congratulate the king, was expected to kill rumours about Dutch relations with Denkyira by offering the Asante the correct explanation of their relationship.

Among other things, van Nyendaal was to point out that the Dutch did not take any part in the Denkyira defeat of the Akani in 1697. Admittedly the Dutch had paid as much as 100 bendas (£800) to the Denkyira, but the amount was meant to enlist Denkyira support in their war against Abe Tagee (Takyi) of Komenda. If van Nyendaal were to be asked why the Dutch never assisted the Akani against Denkyira, the answer should simply be that no such request had been made. Van Nyendaal was thereafter to give presents to the Asante king. He was to show the Asante traders the stock of goods and their prices and to invite them to trade only with the Dutch.[1]

It is understandable that the Dutch should have hastened to make friends with the Asante in order to secure their commercial interests, but the lengths to which they went to explain their relationship with Denkyira and its neighbours make one suspicious of what they were trying to hide. Although there is no doubt that unsuccessful efforts were made to get Denkyira soldiers to fight for the Dutch against the Komenda, Dutch–Denkyira relations were deeper than the Dutch would have had us believe. There were many reasons why the Dutch took much interest in Denkyira, the most important of which was economic.

Before 1701 Denkyira was the most powerful and prosperous state in the hinterland of the coastline from Assini to Anomabo. It virtually controlled all the gold traded to the European forts there, since all the gold-producing states such as Aowin, Wassa, Assin, Adansi, and the states that formed the nucleus of the Asante empire were under Denkyira.[2]

This made it commercially advisable for the Europeans to court its support. In 1692, for instance, messengers from the Brandenburg and Dutch companies, on separate missions, met at Abankeseso, the capital of Denkyira, with presents for the king.[3] Their efforts were well rewarded, for Boa Amponsem, the king of Denkyira, was also

[1] N.B.K.G. 233, Instructions to van Nyendaal, 9 Oct. 1701; N.B.K.G. 57, Report of Jan van Sevenhuysen to the X, 15 Apr. 1700–16 Nov. 1701; W.I.C. 917, Sevenhuysen to the X, 16 Nov. 1701.

[2] Bosman, op. cit., p. 64; Ward, op. cit., p. 120.

[3] Bosman, op. cit., p. 218.

anxious to seek better trading facilities for his state. In pursuit of such a policy he used his influence to settle differences that were likely to disrupt trade. On one such occasion the English sent him presents consisting of satin, perpetuans, and carpets after his envoys had composed differences which had arisen between Asebu, Fetu, and Eguafo.[1] When the English wanted to settle at Allampo, it was the messengers of the Denkyira king who accompanied the English servants to Ado, king of Akwamu.[2] It is also significant to note that the king took direct interest in the day-to-day activities on the coast by appointing one Ampim as his representative on the coast.[3]

Through its political and economic power, Denkyira was able to raise loans from the European traders for its wars. In 1697 the English, for instance, were known to have helped Denkyira against Akani. In 1699 Denkyira was advanced about £70 worth[4] of trade goods from Cape Coast, which were to be paid for in slaves. But after the war the debt remained unpaid. In such a situation, if any further help were needed, Denkyira was more likely to look somewhere else for help. Even so, there is no indication that Denkyira borrowed goods from the Dutch to fight the Asante war. And yet it is commonly held that Denkyira bequeathed not only the 'Elmina Note', but a considerable debt of about £7,000 it had contracted for the war, to the Asante.[5] It is doubtful whether the Dutch would have ever credited such a large sum to any state. Nor was Denkyira on the list of people and states owing moneys to the Dutch, although Dutch–Denkyira trade was considerable.[6]

One would expect that in their correspondence with the Directors in Holland, and in the instructions to, and the replies from, van Nyendaal, reference would be made either to the 'Note' and/or to a debt. Instead the Dutch were rather worried that the Asante were 'so taken up with plundering the riches of Denkyira', and prayed for the normal resumption of the trade.[7] In fact, it is most unlikely that, in the highly competitive trade of the time, the Dutch would be so

[1] T70/363, Castle Account, 21 Sept. 1690.
[2] T70/364, Castle Journal, 23 Nov. 1690.
[3] T70/373, Castle Account, Nov. 1698.
[4] T70/375, Castle Account, 25 Mar. 1699.
[5] Bowdich, op. cit., p. 332; Reindorf, op. cit., p. 59. Claridge asserts that the debt amounted to £9,000: op. cit. i. 603.
[6] W.I.C. 484, Outstanding Debts, Aug. 1698, Sept. 1704.
[7] N.B.K.G. 57/97, W.I.C. 917, From van Sevenhuysen to the X, 16 Nov. 1701. According to Bosman it took the Asante fifteen days to collect the booty, p. 65.

tactless as to press the victorious Asante for any debts. What may be readily conceded is that in the interest of trade some friendly relations soon developed between the Dutch and the Denkyira; but the common assertion that the victory conferred Denkyira's assets and liabilities on Asante is difficult to reconcile with the events of the period. Any assets the Asante might have gained were merely the brighter prospects for a close alliance with the Dutch, who, in turn, were very anxious to establish friendly relations with Asante, the new giant in the interior.

Asante connections with the Dutch played a prominent role in the negotiations for the cession of the Dutch possessions to the English in the nineteenth century. These connections started immediately after, but not before, 1701. They developed independently and not because of any previous alliance that had existed between the Dutch and the Denkyira. It was the Dutch who went all out to secure the friendship of the new power. This is clearly shown by van Nyendaal's mission to the Asante capital in 1701, which paved the way for Asante–Dutch friendship. Besides the costly gifts he delivered on his arrival, the Dutch continued to shower presents on the Asante king. In 1702, for instance, 'a fine red velvet cloth, and a black beaver cap with a red plume' were sent to the envoy to be delivered to the king.[1] In addition to the presents, van Nyendaal was instructed to invite the king to send one of his sons to the coast. The prince could either come on a short visit or stay with the Dutch. Such generous acts had only one ulterior motive, namely, to secure the goodwill of the Asante. It is a fact that David van Nyendaal died soon after his return to Elmina without having written his report, but it is reasonable to suppose that his stay with the Asante of more than a year proved fruitful.

That the envoy was well received may be attested by the fact that he was even able to stand as surety at court for some needy Assin traders in the Asante capital.[2] One of the reasons why van Nyendaal was successful was the impression that the Dutch gesture in sending their representative to Asante created on the people. The bonds of Dutch–Asante relationship may be said to have been laid by van Nyendaal rather than by any assets which the Denkyira defeat conferred on Asante. Soon both began to reap mutual benefits from

[1] W.I.C. 917, From General de la Palma to van Nyendaal in Ashanti, 18 July 1702.

[2] W.I.C. 917, Minutes of Director-General and Council, 5 June 1702.

the alliance. The Elmina, on whom the Dutch had depended for so long, also became the allies of the Asante. This helped the Asante in later years to count on the support of an articulate group of Africans on the coast during the period of the Asante drive towards the sea. Little wonder, then, that eventually the Elmina and the Asante began to claim 'blood relationships' with each other.[1]

Other European traders on the coast also began trying to win the Asantehene's favours. They all realized that it would be commercially unwise to sit idly by while the Dutch made friends with the most potent African state. Anglo-Dutch competition was therefore extended into Asante. Sir Dalby Thomas, the energetic Agent-General at Cape Coast, also began to dispatch his servants into Asante. He strongly recommended to his superiors in London that adequate presents should be sent to the important African rulers, especially the kings of Asante and Akwamu. He suggested that they should be given 'fine broad cloth [of] deep glossy colour, scarlet and best glossy blue'; and he kept reminding London of his requests by impressing upon them that 'the trade with Asante [was] so important and the King's friendship so valuable that they [the English could] never be too generous with him'. He even suggested that a 'press bed' should be sent to Osei Tutu. He was also impressed by the manners of the king of Asante who always 'returned a dashee for a dashee'.[2]

Generosity on both sides counted in the relationships that developed between the Europeans and Africans. But for these to work efficiently there was the need for trusted servants on both sides who could interpret policies accurately and wisely. It was on the behaviour of such people that better relations were founded. To secure the goodwill of each state the Europeans endeavoured to 'penetrate into every country of trade to get a cabeshire or chief trader' to take residence near their factories.[3] Every encouragement in the form of providing aid for housing was given. But although a company might succeed in attracting such people, few African traders became irrevocably tied to any particular company, as is seen from the frequent renewals of the contracts made in the seventeenth century. African reluctance to allow any European monopoly

[1] Coombs, op. cit., p. 11.

[2] T70/5/17, Sir Dalby to R.A.C., 6 Mar. 1706. Sir Dalby felt the Asantehene's friendship was worth any amount that could be bestowed on him in presents.

[3] T70/5/57, 8 May 1709.

of trading and the clash of interests must be mainly attributed to the differing conceptions of life and property. Although both sides tried to adopt a policy of interdependence, the effective application of the policy depended on the degree to which each could impress itself on the other. Along the coast the multiplicity of petty states enabled the Europeans to exercise a sort of political power. In the interior interference was far more difficult and virtually non-existent in the more economically and politically powerful states; for whenever it suited them they could close the paths to the coast.

# CHAPTER IV

# Europeans and Local Politics

In order to reap maximum benefits from trade the Europeans immersed themselves in the politics of the local states. Nevertheless, it has been the popular belief that commerce was the main, even the sole, interest that bound Europe to Africa, and that Europeans came to Africa to trade, so that until the latter half of the nineteenth century they preferred not to involve themselves in matters of culture and politics. It has also been claimed that Afro-European relationships were based only on partnerships in which the newcomers paid rents to the local chiefs for the land on which they built their forts and castles.[1] A closer look at the European records, however, makes such popular conceptions untenable. Undoubtedly, the primary objective of the Europeans was commercial, but they 'could not remain indifferent to the changes in the balance of power which would affect trade routes from the interior to the forts'.[2] On the Gold Coast, where there was a great concentration of forts, abstention from local politics was not practicable, whatever might have been the case in other areas.

Although the death-rate of the European personnel in the seventeenth century was very high, the erection of the fortified houses and lodges somehow ensured a continuity of purpose for the companies. It therefore became essential to have some measure of peace and stability in and around the forts and their immediate hinterland to ensure maximum exploitation. If there had been only one trading company on the coast it could have easily adopted a 'wait and see' attitude, which would surely have forced the Africans to come down to the coast in search of European goods; but this was not possible in a place where rival companies of different nations vied with each other for favours.

From the 1620s it became increasingly apparent that those companies that were well organized and financially stable would involve

[1] K. O. Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta* (Oxford, 1956), p. 4; Fage, *Ghana: A New Interpretation*, p. 49; Davies, *The Royal African Company*, p. 6.

[2] M. Priestley, 'The Ashanti Question and the British', *J.A.H.* II. i. (1961), 35.

themselves in local affairs. In the early 1630s, however, interference was mainly practised by the Dutch, who overshadowed the other companies through their superior financial and numerical strength. It was towards the end of the seventeenth century that the reconstituted English company felt strong enough to follow the example of the Dutch.

Initially even the powerful Dutch West India Company was somehow inhibited by the presence of the Portuguese, however weak the latter may have been by the 1620s. The Dutch realized that any extensive support which the Portuguese secured from the Africans was apt to work against their interests. In fact the fear of the Portuguese ruled out any overt participation in local affairs. At best the Dutch would provide surreptitious help to the Africans, as they did in 1629, when the sixty muskets they lent the Asebu gave them an easy victory over the Etsi.[1] Where such help was likely to be countered by the Portuguese, they counselled reconciliation. In 1634, for instance, they would have willingly helped Asebu against Fante, but it was feared that any such support would drive the Fante into the hands of the Portuguese, and so they chose to mediate in the dispute. When the Dutch willingly helped the Asebu with firearms against Etsi in 1634, the latter had to abandon their war designs to avoid defeat at the hands of their musket-armed enemies.[1]

It is debatable how effective such firearms were in local struggles in the 1630s. Perhaps the importance lay not so much in their effectiveness as in the psychological edge they gave to whoever wielded them. The immensity of such an advantage was due to the fact that firearms were generally in short supply. It may be remembered that the Portuguese had officially been prohibited from selling firearms to the heathen.[2] The Dutch also were, until after 1650, forbidden to trade in firearms. Therefore the few that were loaned or presented as gifts to the Africans played a decisive role in settling issues, as witness the spectacular Asebu defeat of Abrembo (Abrem) in 1629, when the former got help in the form of firearms from the Dutch.

As the Europeans were controlling the supply of these deadly weapons, it was difficult for them to resist the temptation of being drawn into local affairs, especially since the prevailing political climate was ideal for such interference. It was easy for the Europeans

[1] O.W.I.C. 11/3, Letter from Fort Nassau to the XIX, dated 15 Feb. 1634.
[2] Boxer, *Four Centuries of Portuguese Expansion 1415–1825*, pp. 7–8.

to get themselves involved in the affairs of the petty states, which were weak and therefore could not offer any effective opposition. Had there been a well organized and politically strong African state on the coast, it is likely that the Europeans would have been reluctant to venture into local affairs. In addition to the local fragmentation there were the European rivalries, which also created more opportunities for intrigues and counter-intrigues.

The fear lest the Europeans offered help to one rival state against another that did not have forts in its territory worked in favour of the newcomers, who were almost always given a ready welcome in the coastal states. In the same way as the Europeans sought to eliminate their competitors, the local people also attempted to control the flow of goods through their states into others. This is clearly illustrated in 1642 by the Eguafo, who insisted in their agreement with the Dutch that no help be given to the Adom in their impending war.[1]

After 1642, when the Dutch had successfully driven away the Portuguese from the Gold Coast, all inhibitions about involvement in local affairs were cast aside. Henceforth the Dutch not only claimed to be the rightful successors of the Portuguese, but also assumed the right to exercise powers, real or imaginary, over the Africans in the towns where they had established themselves. A glance at the terms of the 1642 agreement between them and Axim clearly shows their real intentions. They arrogated to themselves the right to exercise judicial and political authority in the state,[2] and even asked that their approval be sought in the election and installation of chiefs and caboceers in the town.

As a result of their extravagant claims whatever goodwill Axim might initially have had towards the Dutch soon disappeared, and, only five years after the agreement, Dutch–Axim relations had worn so thin that the Dutch had to resort to force and subterfuge to maintain their hold. By 1647 they were requisitioning large numbers of troops to be sent to Axim to hold the 'unfriendly people' in subjection. One can measure the extent of the Dutch loss of face by the arrangement whereby their ships approaching Axim were advised to fly the English flag.[3] Instead of investigating the reasons

[1] O.W.I.C. 13/67, Accord between General Ruychaver and the king of Eguafo, dated 1641 (clause 7).

[2] O.W.I.C. 12, Accord between General Ruychaver and the elders of Axim, 17 Feb. 1642 (clauses 4, 6): De Jonge, op. cit., pp. 48–9.

[3] O.W.I.C. 11, J. v.d. Wel to the XIX; dated Nov. 1646. Idem/11/209–10:

for their unpopularity, they sought and found a scapegoat for their misfortunes not in their behaviour but in that of the English. True, the English might have contributed to the waning of Dutch influence, but the crux of the discontent lay in the impositions on the economic, political, and social liberties of the people. Although the Portuguese before them had claimed to exercise control over the local states, their limited resources in men and capital made it difficult, if not impossible, for them to have any substance of power in the places where they had established themselves. The Dutch, on the other hand, did everything to translate words into action.

Having grown swollen-headed from the fact that they had been given control over the judicial and political affairs of Axim, the Dutch went further to curtail Axim's independence in the local carrying trade of cotton cloths from the Ivory Coast to the Gold Coast, because they were unable to compete effectively with the Axim people, who travelled further inland to buy the cloths. Dutch interference occasioned a war, which claimed the lives of some of their soldiers. But for the timely help from Encassar (Sefwi) the Dutch would have been hard put to it to defend themselves in 1647, when the Director-General, van der Wel, had to hasten from St. Thomé with soldiers against Axim. While he landed soldiers from the ship *t'Hooft van Holland* on the coast, a large number of Encassar troops sealed off the northern approaches to Axim.[1] Thus caught between two fires, the people laid down their arms. This was, however, only a temporary respite in Dutch–Axim hostilities, for soon another war flared up when the people refused to pay taxes on their fish. Once again it was their superior firearms and the faithful support of Elmina troops that enabled the Dutch to maintain their grip on Axim.

From their base at Axim efforts were made to extend Dutch influence further inland in order to ensure that the rich Egyira gold mines would be profitably exploited. With this in view, in 1654 the Dutch built Fort Ruychaver at Sanaya, thirty miles inland on the Ankobra River.[2] This enterprise was short-lived because the Dutch factor overreached himself in interfering with the affairs of the local people. After initial opposition from the Egyira people the Dutch

J. v.d. Wel to the XIX, 3 July, 26 Sept. 1647. O.W.I.C. 10, J. v.d. Wel to XIX, 26 Oct. 1648. Ratelband, op. cit., p. 270.

[1] O.W.I.C. 11/210, J. v.d. Wel to the XIX, 26 Sept. 1647.

[2] N.B.K.G. 81, Valckenburg's Diary, 1 Jan. 1659; Claridge, op. cit. i. 130.

managed to establish themselves in the area, and were determined to prevent all forms of opposition by encouraging friendly Axim salt traders to settle around their lodge. This was very much resented by the local people, but, in spite of their opposition, all went well for some time, as is evidenced by the favourable report from de Liefde, the factor, in 1659. Not long after, however, all was anything but peaceful. Communications between Axim and the lodge were cut, and early in 1660 disturbing news of the destruction of the lodge reached the coast. The failure of the venture was not primarily due to lack of local support, but to the tactlessness of de Liefde.

When Jantecona, an Adom caboceer, died without having paid the debt of £52 he owed to the company, de Liefde *panyarred* his wife and two children. Customarily there was nothing wrong with such forcible seizure of people in order to force a debtor to pay his debt, but in this instance the sub-factor miscalculated the effects of his action; since he already had two hostages in his keeping, one would have expected him to release them before seizing the widow and children of the deceased. Naturally the family was affronted and therefore demanded restitution and compensation, but they were treated with contempt. De Liefde would neither allow Corre Chary (Kore Kyere), the captain of Egyira, to intercede on their behalf, nor do anything himself about the request to get the men released at once. Thus outraged, the Adom army, under Boubou, marched on Ruychaver, and in the ensuing battle the beleaguered sub-factor caused the whole establishment to be blown up. Instead of helping the Dutch the Egyira people looked on with satisfaction, and some even overtly supported the Adom, in order to force the Axim merchants out. Thus ended disastrously the first Dutch attempt to establish themselves in the interior.[1]

After this they concentrated on exploiting Egyira from Axim, where they succeeded in maintaining their privileged position. By

[1] N.B.K.G. 81, Valckenburg's Diary, 4 Jan.–6 Feb. 1659. Historians give no details of the causes of the disturbance. Information on the destruction of the factory is also scanty and conflicting. Beyond the mere mention of a fort at Egyira which was said to have been destroyed by 'the natives sometime ago' Ward is silent about it. Not even Bosman, the Dutch historian, is illuminating on this event. He claims that it was a local chieftain who lured the Dutch factor into the lodge and blew up himself and the Dutchmen. Claridge is, however, non-committal. He gives two versions of the story. But from the records of the Dutch it is clear that the fort was destroyed by de Liefde, the sub-factor. Ward mistakenly dates the event to 1680. Ward, *A History of Ghana*, p. 90; Claridge, op. cit. i. 130; Bosman, op. cit., pp. 14–15.

the end of the century observers were emphatic that in Axim the elders dared not take any important decision without the consent of the Dutch Governor.[1]

Nowhere on the coast was European involvement in local affairs as crippling as at Komenda (Eguafo). Endemic dynastic wars throughout most of the century paralysed the power of the local rulers. But its favourable geographical position brought it constantly into the orbit of European affairs. The more the Europeans increased their efforts to obtain a hold on the place, the more confused the politics became. Komenda, the 'vegetable garden' of the coast, was the healthiest spot for the Europeans; it also had the advantage of being within easy reach of such commercially important local states as Wassa, Twifo and Assin, Adansi and Asante.[2] The place therefore, not unnaturally, became a prize for the European companies, all of which endeavoured to keep out rivals. This involved both Africans and Europeans in frequent quarrels and even in wars.

The first attempt by the Europeans to establish themselves at Little Komenda was marred by an unfortunate incident when in 1637 a brawl between a drunken Dutch sailor and a group of people on the beach nearly resulted in the complete massacre of the crew of the ship *Bruinswick*. It was only the timely arrival of a French ship on the scene that saved the situation. Even then in the confusion a sailor lost his life and the captain of the ship was wounded.[3] The incident forced the Dutch to withdraw their cruising boat, which had been stationed to trade at Komenda, but it did not completely discourage them. Their efforts proved successful when, in 1642, they obtained a most-favoured-nation agreement with Komenda.[4] Obviously over-satisfied with the favourable terms in the agreement, the Dutch presumed they had more powers conferred on them than was really the case, as their subsequent behaviour shows.

It is true that the Dutch were not alone in trying to settle disputes that were likely to disrupt their commercial interests, but the lengths to which they always went to secure their ends show that they did

[1] Barbot, 'A Description of the Coasts of North and South Guinea', p. 150; Bosman, op. cit., letter 1, p. 3.

[2] Dapper, op. cit., pp. 66–7; T. Ogilby, *Africa* (London), p. 422; Barbot, op. cit., p. 156.

[3] W.I.C. Versp. 1162/75–81, Report of N. van Yperen to the XIX, 1 July 1639.

[4] O.W.I.C. 13/67, Agreement between General Ruychaver and the king and elders of Aguafo. This contract is undated and unsigned.

not content themselves with mere advice but were determined to see that their will prevailed. An incident in 1644 may illustrate this point. When in that year one Edwan drove away his unpopular brother, Tagee, from the stool, the Dutch tried to effect an amicable settlement between the opposing parties. In this, one would have thought that they would only sit as impartial arbitrators. When a Dutch mission to Eguafo on behalf of Tagee was rebuffed by the king-makers, who asked whether in the event of the death of the Director-General it would be normal for them to appoint an Englishman or a Frenchman in his place, the Dutch were not deterred.[1] Having failed in peaceful negotiation, they hired the Fetu, through whose help they managed to force Tagee on the Komenda. This act ushered in a period of troubles.

There were troubles practically wherever the Dutch established themselves on the coast. People refused to be bound by Dutch claims to tolls on their fish. In a place like Shama, where the River Pra served as a highway for conveying firewood and foodstuffs to the coast, the Dutch came up against stiff opposition. In spite of the agreement of 1643, by which Shama had promised not to close the river and the footpaths to those who brought down provisions, the Dutch were constantly forced to remind the people of their promises and, as in 1656, to enter into another agreement which empowered soldiers to impound boats of defaulters.[2] Nor was the situation any better at Elmina, which was their headquarters; here opposition to Dutch claims was, at times, much more spirited, as for instance in 1682, when Elmina and Fetu forces besieged the castle for a long time to protest against tolls levied on their fish.[3]

But troubles at Komenda overshadowed everything on the coast. After the initial show of force in the 1640s the place remained comparatively calm until the 1670s, when the French and the English made concerted efforts to gain a foothold at Little Komenda. Although the former had shown very little interest in the Gold Coast in the seventeenth century, the Komenda still cherished their memory in spite of the 1642 agreement with the Dutch which expressly

[1] Ratelband, *São Jorge da Mina*, p. 23; O.W.I.C. 11/9, Report from van de Wel to the XIX.

[2] N.B.K.G. 222/48–9, Contract with the Country of Jaby on behalf of J. Ruychaver and Baqua Quakita, king of Jaby and the elders of Chama, 1643. The original contract in O.W.I.C. 12 has no date. N.B.K.G. 222/315, Agreement between General Van Heusien and the Caboceros of Chama, 1659.

[3] Barbot, op. cit., p. 167.

sought to shut the French out of the area. Their desire to have the French was due, *inter alia*, to the failure of the Dutch to exploit fully the regions over which they claimed to exercise control. This was partly because of their limited personnel on the coast, but more due to the Dutch policy of not building forts too close together. The apparent neglect of some areas was greatly resented by the local middlemen, who could not sit unconcernedly by whilst other places were being developed. In 1647, for instance, the Dutch had abandoned Little Komenda on the ground that the place was unhealthy.[1] And yet they continued to prevent others from trading there. Little wonder that in the 1660s the king was said to have invited the English and the French to build forts in his state. One Kukumi was sent to France to request the French king, Louis XIV, to send traders into his country, and although nothing definite is known about the outcome of the mission, Komenda continued to expect that one day their request would be met.[2]

It was the English who made use of the opportunity. In 1668 the Dutch unsuccessfully protested against English attempts to build a lodge at Little Komenda, and requested them to pull down what had already been built. Obviously encouraged by the Komenda, the English risked Dutch displeasure and went ahead with their plans. But no sooner had they established themselves than the Dutch fomented troubles which led to a civil war between Little Komenda and the capital, Great Komenda. In the confusion which followed the English were forced to abandon their plan; their hope for a quick return to Komenda took a long time to materialize after their factory had been burnt down in 1685.[3]

It was during this time of struggle and instability that the French, who had not immediately responded to the offers of the Komenda king in the 1660s, reappeared on the scene. In 1688, six years after Barbot's second visit to the Gold Coast, the French sent an expedition under a M. du Casse to establish a fort at Komenda. It was too late, since the Dutch interest was already strongly entrenched. Drawing upon their own practical experience of the recent past, the English doubted the outcome of the French venture, and correctly forecast that they would be driven away.[4] True enough, as soon as du Casse

[1] O.W.I.C. 11/28, J. v.d. Wel to the XIX, 8 Aug. 1647.

[2] Barbot, op. cit., p. 154; Astley, *Collections* ii. 586.

[3] C.O. 1/23, Letter from O. Ired and T. Pearson to R.A.C., 2 Feb. 1688.

[4] T70/11/31, From same to same, 9 Jan., 12 May 1688; W.I.C. 917, From Director-General Sevenhuysen to X, 15 Apr. 1700; Bosman, op. cit., p. 27.

left another civil war broke out, in which the French venture soon went the way of the English. Komenda paid dearly for its invitation to the French, for during the unrest their French-orientated king was killed and his supporters driven into exile. As far as the French were concerned, they considered the episode enough for the seventeenth century; when they reappeared on the Gold Coast at the beginning of the eighteenth century their efforts were concentrated on Assini, to the extreme west.

By means of force and astuteness the Dutch, who had emerged the undisputed masters of Komenda, quickly converted their lodge into a fort, and in 1688 entered into another, a much more binding treaty with Eguafo state, which divested the ruler of any shadow of authority over his coastal strip. Among other things the agreement held that the king and his elders had lost control over the beach between the rivers Benya and Bosompra.[1] To establish a fort by force was one thing; it was a completely different matter, however, to preserve and maintain such a position. In an attempt to remain the sole trading company at Komenda, Dutch energies were taxed to the extreme; for quite apart from the opposition offered by the local people, they had to meet the opposition of other European rivals.

The struggles at Komenda ended in a war that involved many other states. The reasons why the war could not be localized were the increased trade on the coast and the alliances into which the local states were forced to enter. The Europeans also sought more than mere trade in their alliances with the states, and now began to contract agreements which were much more defensive and offensive in purpose. This is clearly shown in the agreement made between the Dutch and Fetu in 1688, by which Fetu was to assist the Dutch in time of war. In return Fetu was promised protection for its women and children in Elmina Castle, and help to the value of £320, in the event of an attack.[2]

It is difficult to understand what actually led the Dutch to contract such an agreement after they had complacently reported that all was well at Komenda. Judging by subsequent events, one is led to believe that it was a hollow claim calculated to throw dust in the

[1] W.I.C. 122/30, Agreement between N. Sweerts and the king and elders of Aguafo, 4 Jan. 1688.

[2] W.I.C. 122, Agreement between N. Sweerts and Aduafo Ahinakwa, king, and elders of Fetu, 21 June 1688.

eyes of others. It is not unlikely that the Dutch were anticipating an attack from Komenda, and wanted to be assured of help in time of need. They even pushed on their treaty making into the interior to secure help from some of the powerful inland states. Two years after the defensive agreement with Fetu, a similar one was reached with Twifo, which also held that in the event of any attack by land or sea the Twifo were to come to the assistance of the Dutch 'with all their fighting force'. Like Fetu, the Twifo were promised help of about £640 in munitions of all kinds, as well as protection in Elmina Castle for their 'property, women and children'.[1]

Not long afterwards the Dutch had occasion to call their allies to help against the Komenda, who attempted to loosen the hold of the Dutch on them. From 1690 the Komenda began to stifle trade between the Dutch and their new ally, Twifo, by blocking the trade routes to the Twifo. In 1693, for instance, the Dutch had to pay compensation to Twifo when the Komenda impounded what they had bought from their fort and then distributed the sequestered goods to friendly states in order to secure their help in the event of a Twifo attack.[2] During all these events the Dutch refused to be provoked; they were even prepared to lift the tolls on fish caught at Little Komenda; but nothing could satisfy the Komenda, who were in daily communication with the English with a view to dislodging the Dutch from Little Komenda. In the light of all this, the Dutch redoubled their efforts to seek as much local support as possible.[3]

The English found the Dutch–Eguafo struggle an ideal moment to avenge the burning of their lodge in 1685, and generously gave help to the Komenda to defy their rivals. In 1694 they gave about £240 worth of goods to Komenda 'to promote trade and peace', and shortly after they optimistically hoped to benefit from the differences between the Dutch and Komenda.[4] Undoubtedly it was the help which they offered 'to promote trade' which strengthened

[1] W.I.C. 122/36, Agreement of friendship and mutual understanding between N. Sweerts and J. Smit, and Amakon, king, Ako Dompo and Teuba, elders of 'Jeuffer (Twifo).

[2] W.I.C. 124, From Director-General and Council to X, 24 Nov. 1693.

[3] W.I.C. 124, Elmina Journal, Meeting of Council of Director-General, 9 Jan. 1695.

[4] T70/11/12, Report from Cape Coast Castle to R.A.C., 2 Mar. 1694, 2 Aug. 1694.

their hope to benefit from what was happening at Komenda. They even did more than hope. When Dutch agents went into the interior to enlist support against Komenda, it was discovered that the English agents had long preceded them, and had unsuccessfully attempted to hire Twifo armies for £2,400 to come to the side of Komenda.[1]

By 1694 the atmosphere at Komenda was suffused with suspicion and rumours of war between Komenda and the Dutch; perhaps it was in a desire to ease the tension that the Dutch brought matters to a head by their attempt to prospect for gold in Komenda without the prior consent of the king. This expedition may have been fitted out partly because of ignorance or partly because of the Dutch desire to precipitate a war which would give them a pretext to attack Komenda. Whatever their motives, the miners were attacked and some seized and imprisoned. This was immediately followed by a Dutch attack on a local merchant prince, John Kabes, who was accused of having caused the troubles.[2] In the skirmish which ensued both sides suffered a few casualties, and, for all practical purposes, the Dutch–Komenda war had begun.

The war, which was the longest-drawn-out struggle between a local state and a European company, had far-reaching effects on the history of the Gold Coast in general. It involved practically all the neighbouring states, as well as the English, who provided substantial help for the Komenda people. Contrary to the popular conception that the Fante and Asebu states helped Komenda because they were afraid of an attack from the Dutch (in the event of Dutch victory),[3] one clearly sees that it was not mere threats from the Dutch, but the activities of the English, that forced the two states into the struggle. Apart from the fact that Asebu and Fante had always helped the English against the Dutch, the evidence suggests that they were bribed to fight against the Dutch in this war. In 1695 the English reported that they had raised a powerful army at the request of Komenda, which had driven away the Twifo and Kabestera soldiers who had been hired by the Dutch against Komenda. The assistance of Asebu and Fante went a long way to contribute to the Dutch defeat in the first encounter.

[1] W.I.C. 124, Elmina Journal, Council Meeting, 9 Jan. 1695.

[2] T70/11/117, From Cape Coast Castle to R.A.C., Jan. 1695; Bosman, op. cit., p. 28; Claridge, op. cit., p. 147. All the general books on the Gold Coast (Ghana) have something on the Dutch–Komenda war. They have, however, been based on Bosman's description. But Bosman was himself an interested party in the whole struggle.

[3] Bosman, op. cit., p. 28.

From that time the latter set about repairing their losses by seeking the support of many more states. They got the Adom and some Fetu soldiers, as well as Tekyi Ankan, the brother of the Komenda king, to defect to their side, but they suffered another defeat in the second encounter.[1]

In desperation the Dutch adopted arbitrary and high-handed acts in an attempt to instil fear into the people. While a brother of the Komenda king, one Accameny (?Asemeni), was exiled to Surinam, on the grounds that he had not allowed his servants to fight for the Dutch, Aban, uncle of John Kabes, and one of the oldest and most influential servants at Elmina, was imprisoned on similar charges and forced to escape to Cape Coast, where the English readily offered him employment.[2] The arbitrary deportations and imprisonments led to a rapid decline of Dutch influence. It was only a timely change in the directorate of the company on the coast that halted the complete collapse of Dutch influence. General Sevenhuysen, who succeeded Staphorst, was tactful and soon set out to retrieve the company's fortunes. A few months after his appointment he succeeded in patching up the differences between the Dutch and the king of Komenda by signing the Dutch–Komenda agreement of 1696.

The fact that the agreement soon became a dead letter was not due to any ill faith on the side of Komenda; nor can it be attributed to the designs of the English, but rather to the inordinate ambition of the Dutch. It is therefore important to examine the contents of the agreement in greater detail to understand why the Dutch–Komenda war did not end in 1696.

After the defeat and the expense to which the Dutch had been put in money and men, one would have expected them to treat Komenda with some respect, and seek easy terms. But far from it. They seem rather to have acted on the assumption that they had invariably been right, and that the Komenda were blameable and therefore their actions punishable. As not even a single clause in the

[1] T70/11/118, Cape Coast Castle to R.A.C., 14 May 1695; T70/374, Oct. 1697 shows the English to have given '6 barrels gun powder, and 11 lead bars to Aguafo'. Bosman, op. cit., p. 28.

[2] W.I.C. 484/144, Report of W. de la Palma and Council to X, 30 May 1701; T70/11/119, Cape Coast Castle to R.A.C., 11 May 1696. A month previously, the English had given seventy-five gallons of brandy to the kings of Sabu and Eguafo and John Kabes of Komenda 'to distribute among their soldiers . . .'. T70/374, 24 Apr. 1696.

whole agreement favoured Komenda, one could conveniently say that it was meant, in effect, to punish, not to conciliate.

Clause one held that the Komenda king should pay two ounces of gold for each of the twenty-one company slaves that had been captured in the war; and the second demanded the return of the cannon and ammunition that had been seized, failing which the king was to pay £400 (50 bendas of gold). Thirdly, the king was to pay 250 marks of gold for having brought about an unlawful and expensive war, in which six white men had lost their lives. Half of the amount was to be paid at once, and the remainder in three months; after that the Komenda were to disband their (Akany) auxiliary forces. Fifthly, the king and his elders were to swear, on their own behalf and on behalf of their successors, never to grant permission to any other nation to build a house in their state, let alone to assist any nation with arms against the Dutch. The sixth clause asked for a free passage for all traders from Denkyira and other inland states on their way to Komenda and Elmina, while clause seven asked that all matters involving debts and disputes between people living at Little Komenda and Elmina were to be brought before the Director-General and his council. Clause eight held that the king should live in peace with his renegade brother, Tekyi Ankan. In the event of an attack on the Dutch, the king and all his forces were to come to their assistance, but should Komenda be attacked the General promised to assist only when such help would not be prejudicial to Dutch trade. The last clause forbade Komenda to trade with interlopers, and asked that all goods purchased from interlopers be impounded.[1] In all the king of Komenda was to pay about £7,000 sterling for wars in which he had been consistently victorious! Little wonder then that Bosman described the agreement as something 'which was very much to be wished for'.[2]

The spectacular success of the Dutch was due not only to General Sevenhuysen's tactfulness but also to the financial difficulties through which the English were passing. Although the latter resented what they described as Dutch 'tampering with the king of Komenda', they looked on helplessly. In October of 1696 the company's officials reported that they only had 'six marks of gold and no goods'.[3]

[1] W.I.C. 122, Agreement between General Sevenhuysen and the king and elders of Komenda, 24 Oct. 1696. Claridge mistakenly attributes the signing of the agreement to General Staphorst, the immediate predecessor of Sevenhuysen.

[2] Bosman, op. cit., p. 30.

[3] T70/11/119–20, From Cape Coast Castle to R.A.C., 11 May, 1 Oct. 1696.

Thus it was to be expected that they could provide no help to the Komenda under such circumstances. When this is added to the war-weariness of Komenda, then one understands why the latter accepted such crushing terms from the Dutch. Not only did the Komenda agree to pay compensation, but the king's renegade brother, Ankan, was allowed to reside wherever he chose! But less than a year after the agreement was made, it was no longer respected. It needed no promptings from the English—which was how the Dutch sought to explain matters—for Komenda to throw overboard the heavy burden, which had been imposed, ironically, not as a result of defeat, but as the price of victory over the Dutch! Indeed it is difficult to avoid the inference that the agreement was accepted as a time-buying device, for in the seventeenth-century Gold Coast, where there were many rival companies seeking to establish themselves on the coast, it would have been very surprising if such an agreement had been lasting. Indeed it is rather more surprising that the king and his elders signed the agreement at all than that they soon broke it.

Not long after the agreement, Dutch–Komenda relations touched the nadir of deterioration, and the Komenda people frequently and openly defied the Dutch. The latter therefore determined to 'chastise' Komenda to serve as an example for the other states.[1] When, despite the agreement, the Dutch could not control the king, it was resolved to depose him in favour of his more amenable brother, Tekyi Ankan, and as this would mean risking yet another war they looked round for more allies. In August 1697 they succeeded in deflecting the Fante from their friendship with the English to their side, and sealed their new relationship with a treaty in which the Fante agreed to come to their assistance. Among other things, the Fante were expected to join forces with Akani and Kabestera to attack Komenda in an attempt to get Tekyi Ankan enstooled in place of his brother. For their services the Fante were to be paid 80 bendas of gold, or £640, but in spite of all the safeguards the Fante army never took the field.[2] Nor did the Dutch have any better luck

[1] W.I.C. 124/12, Bosman's Report to Director-General and Council, 10 Mar. 1700; Bosman, op. cit., p. 30.

[2] W.I.C. 122/44, 'Agreement between Sevenhuysen and the Braffo, Aprobi and Elders of Fanti', 15 Aug. 1697. There is some disagreement on the exact amount paid to the Fante. Bosman himself a signatory of the treaty, puts it at £900. But the Director-General's report says it was eighty marks (about £2,560). I am inclined to Bosman's figure. The amount was 80 bendas. By the end of the

with the other states they approached, although as much as £1,300 was paid to the Adom, Kabestera, and Denkyira.

It is not certain why all these states did not come to the assistance of the Dutch. For the Denkyira, events on their northern border were so threatening that they refunded the money in order to concentrate on their own defence. This was the time when relations with Asante were quickly deteriorating. But the excuse given by the Adom was anything but convincing; they were said to have quarrelled with the Kabestera over how the money they received from the Dutch should be divided.[1] However, when it is known why the Fante stayed out of this war, then the behaviour of the other becomes understandable, since their reasons may well not have been any different from those of the Fante. The latter were both persuaded and forced by the English to desert the Dutch. It is not very clear whether the English really bought their neutrality with the same amount that the Dutch had given them. There is, however, enough circumstantial evidence to the effect that this may really have happened, for the English took positive steps to neutralize the effect of the pro-Dutch party in Fante. At their instigation, and by means of bribery, the Braffo of Fante (Commander-in-Chief), who supported the Dutch cause, was quickly deposed. In September 1697 the English sent presents consisting of lead bars, gunpowder, and brandy to the chief minister (Dey) of Fante 'to carry on his design of deposing the Braffo [*sic*]', and encouraged other friendly states to assist the Dey 'in his designs'. The accounts mention that the king of Eguafo's soldiers had gone to assist the captain of Abora, in order to fight the chief minister.[2]

Deserted by their friends, their money spent to no useful purpose, and with the animosity of the Komenda ever mounting, the Dutch were desperate for help of any kind. Without any assistance from the local states they were left no alternative but to submit to any terms from Komenda or to pit their meagre strength against the strong enemy—attempt which was very likely to end in their outright defeat. Providentially the repatriation of the exiled brother of the king of Komenda from Surinam saved them a lot of embarrassment.

seventeenth century, a benda, which was normally worth £8, was valued at £11. 80 bendas was therefore nearer £900. See W.I.C. 124/12, W. Bosman's Report, 10 Mar. 1700.

[1] Bosman, op. cit., p. 31; Claridge, op. cit., p. 150.

[2] T70/11/122, From Cape Coast Castle to R.A.C., 9 Sept. 1697; T70/374, From Cape Coast Castle to R.A.C., 1 and 18 Sept. 1697; Bosman, op. cit., p. 31.

Unembittered by his treatment, he willingly used his influence to rescue the Dutch; and from that moment when the English committed a great political blunder that nearly lost them much of their influence on the Gold Coast, fortune continued to smile on their cause.

Any peace between the Dutch and the Komenda was bound to work against the English, for surely an increase in Dutch influence at Komenda meant that the English would lose all that they had spent on the Komenda from the beginning of the war. The English considered it treachery on the part of the king of Komenda to have agreed a second time, in less than two years, to live at peace with the Dutch. Understandable though this was, the means they adopted to show their disapproval were rash. The repercussions of their action were far-reaching. Through the perfidy of Tekyi Ankan and the English, the Komenda king, Great Tagee (Tekyi Panin), was murdered when he was invited to Cape Coast Castle.[1] As was to be expected, the act sparked off a war of revenge in which an English-supported force led by the renegade Ankan was defeated in November 1698. Thus Tekyi Ankan, the pretender to the Komenda stool, lost his bid to be made king.[2] He did not have to wait for long, however, before he became the ruler, for the Dutch Director-General, Sevenhuysen, became as tactless as Staphorst before him, and forced Komenda into the arms of the English.

With the help of his faithful African friend, one Akim, Sevenhuysen resorted to arbitrary imprisonment in an effort to purge Komenda and Elmina of people who were considered hostile to Dutch interests. As a result of extortion and threats to lives and property, many of the Africans once again deserted the Dutch for the English. In 1699 the agents of Akim mishandled some traders from Fetu who had come to Elmina; this eventually led to another Dutch–Komenda war, which was exploited by the English-supported Ankan.[3] Once again the Dutch were the losers, and so Ankan was placed on the stool in September 1699.[4] Thus ended the long-drawn-

[1] W.I.C. 917, Report of Director-General and Council, July 1700; Bosman, op. cit., p. 33; Claridge, op. cit., p. 150.

[2] T70/11/125, N. Buckeridge and Council to R.A.C., 6 Apr. 1698. The report mentioned 'an accident in Aguafo camp, likely to create trouble if not prevented . . . which will cost money'. T70/377, Cape Coast Castle Journal, 13 May 1702; Bosman, op. cit., p. 33.

[3] W.I.C. 124/12, Willem Bosman to Director-General and Council, Elmina, 10 Mar. 1700. N.B.K.G. 69/18, Report of W. de la Palma on Sevenhuysen's administration, Apr. 1702; Bosman, op. cit., p. 33.

[4] W.I.C. 917, General Sevenhuysen and Council to X, 30 July 1700.

out struggle between the Dutch and Komenda that had started with the attack on the Dutch miners in 1694. But although active war never flared up between 1699 and 1720, there was no end to the dynastic struggles. It may be safely concluded that the modern division of Komenda into Dutch and English sectors was the direct outcome of the war.

The first two decades of the eighteenth century witnessed a rapid succession of kings in Komenda; a period when power alternated between Dutch and English-supported rulers. Four years after the close of the Dutch–Komenda war, a dispute over the stool offered yet another opportunity for the Europeans to meddle in the affairs of the state. Luckily for Komenda both the Dutch and the English, acting independently, hit on the same candidate, one Tagee Adico, who was considered by both parties to be an ideal candidate for their interests. At a private consultation with John Kabes of Komenda and the kings of Fetu and Asebu the English convinced themselves of Adico's sincerity. Why Komenda affairs should be decided by the kings of Fetu and Asebu is difficult to understand; but one thing stands out clearly, namely that, whatever the nature of the relationship between these states, it went without saying that the traditional king-makers of Komenda had lost their influence.

With a candidate for the stool acceptable to both companies, one would have thought that the struggles would end, but far from it. The new king proved unequal to his duties, and at first became a tool in the hands of the English, whom he exempted from payment of ground rent whenever there was not enough trade at their fort at Little Komenda.[1] Despite the promise to further the cause of the English, all did not go as expected, and the English soon lost their hold in the area. Tagee Adico realized that he had given more than he would ever receive from the English, who never ceased to use threats and reminders to impress on him their capacity to be as harmful as they had been good.[2] Unable to bear the English, he went over to the Dutch. Although the successor of Adico, Abe Tekyi Kuma, was initially English-orientated, he too allied with the Dutch.

That the rulers should in the end desert the English cause was due mainly to the inflexibility of Sir Dalby Thomas, who always

[1] N.B.K.G. 124, W. de la Palma to X, 4 Oct. 1704; W.I.C. 917, W. de la Palma to X, 4 Oct. 1704; N.B.K.G. 57, Report of Sevenhuysen to X, July 1700; T70/1463, Sir Dalby Thomas to R.A.C., 16 and 21 Aug. 1704.

[2] T70/1463, Cape Coast Castle Journal, 20 Mar. 1703.

demanded that the kings should pay back all that his company had spent on them. This was found most unwelcome, since, after all, most of the wars were primarily fought to advance the cause of one or other of the two contending European parties. If the English had heeded the good advice of their agent, John Snow, it would have much advanced their interest. He advised the company to adopt the method of the Dutch whereby debts incurred during such wars were written off, because more often than not such a demand 'occasions only ill natured disputes . . . [*sic*]'. He also advised against the mistaken belief that, by securing amenable rulers in the various states, the English cause would be better advanced.[1]

When a few years later the English agents succeeded in having Abe Tekyi Kuma deposed, the Dutch used all possible methods to get him reinstated. Between 1714 and 1716 they attempted to persuade the Fante and their neighbours to help get Abe Tekyi on the stool at all costs. In July 1715, for instance, the English were so certain of a Fante attack that they hurriedly tried to get their fort repaired in order to withstand any Dutch–Fante onslaught.[2] But the projected Fante attack never became a reality. However, the effects of the rumours on Komenda were crippling.

It was not only at Komenda that the Europeans actively meddled in local politics. In Fetu the English attempted to do what the Dutch did at Komenda. It may be recalled that in the 1640s the Dutch had mistakenly tried to drive them away from their foothold in Fetu. They failed because they underestimated the persistence and perseverance of the Fetu king and his elders in accommodating whomsoever they pleased in their state.[3] Despite Dutch economic threats and outright show of force, the English eventually succeeded in establishing themselves at Cape Coast. By the 1680s, after they had bought out the interests of the Swedes and the Danes, the English company was undisputedly the most powerful at Fetu. In 1688, however, the Dutch made an unsuccessful bid to dislodge the English from Cape Coast, when at their instigation Aduafo, the Fetu king with whom they had entered into a treaty, marched his armies to Cape Coast, where he laid seige to the English castle and

[1] T70/102/47–50, John Snow to R.A.C., 31 July 1705; Davies, op. cit., p. 367.

[2] N.B.K.G. 82, 28 Sept. 1715, 8 Oct.–5 Nov. 1715; T70/1464, Komenda Diary, 9 July 1715.

[3] O.W.I.C. 11/43, J. v.d. Wel to XIX, 17 Nov. 1646; Ratelband. *São Jorge da Mina*, p. 263.

demanded a large sum of money from the beleaguered fort. The demand, however, was refused, and after they had waited in vain, apparently for Dutch help, the seige was raised and the king and his men left for Elmina, where they were warmly welcomed by the Dutch.[1]

True to the terms of the agreement of 1688, the Fetu sought to prevent inland traders who would not send their commodities to the Dutch from coming to the coast through their country. They frequently closed the paths, and not unnaturally the English and their local allies were bound to contest such acts. In 1694 a closure of the paths to the Akani traders led to a war which eventually advanced the political interests of the English at Fetu. The head-chiefs of Fetu were at loggerheads at this time, and thus laid their state bare to European exploitation. Whilst the king remained friendly to the Dutch, his chief minister (Dey) was won over to the English. Thus weakened by internal dissensions, the king's party suffered a great defeat. Early in March 1693 the English jubilantly reported that Nimfa, the Akani general, was pursuing the fleeing Fetu army, and promised to vote more money to help him.[2] In this their efforts were well rewarded. The Fetu king fled to Elmina, never to return to his state; he was deposed in favour of his more amenable brother, Arhin Kuma, who presented himself at Cape Coast Castle soon after the war to swear the oath of allegiance to the English general. He 'took fetish [oath] to be at constant enmity with his brother, and to be ever true to the English'.[3] Subsequent developments in Fetu were to strip the rulers still more of their political powers. For the first two decades of the eighteenth century Fetu remained a mere tool in the hands of the English under Sir Dalby Thomas.

Sir Dalby, who was the English Agent-General between 1704 and 1711, was a man of forceful character who energetically pursued a policy of expansion to further the cause of the English. He aimed at capturing much of the influence which the Dutch exercised on the Gold Coast. He was concerned not only with Fetu; he also sought to win the support of the rulers of Asante, Agona, and Akwamu. In Fetu, where he had a singular success, he combined diplomacy with force to achieve his end. It must be conceded, however, that

[1] T70/11, Abstract of Letters from Cape Coast to R.A.C., 21 Aug. 1689.
[2] T70/11/112, J. Platt and W. Ronan to R.A.C., 10 Mar. 1963/4.
[3] T. Phillips, 'A Journal of a Voyage made in the Hannibal . . .' in Churchill's *Collections* vi. (London, 1732), 208.

Sir Dalby was not the originator of this policy of reducing Fetu to a dependency. But in the very year of his arrival on the coast he had the opportunity to make his influence felt. From the look of things, the reign of Arhin Kuma had seen the English exercising more control over the state. On the death of the king, therefore, the king-makers quickly consulted with John Kabes of Komenda and Ampekan, king of Asebu, and took the unprecedented step of choosing a woman, one Aguaba Brafo, to be queen.[1] This action, which was 'contrary to the custom of that country and usage of the people', was the prelude to more troubles and unrest. In spite of local opposition, Thomas determined to maintain his candidate on the stool. When Ampekan of Asebu, apparently regretting his collaboration in the enstoolment of the queen, tried to help Arhin Pampa, the fugitive heir presumptive at his court, to gain the stool, Sir Dalby did not hesitate to issue threats. 'I have made her queen, so I will protect her and assist her as my Queen against all that will be her enemies [*sic*] without a just cause', he pointed out to the Asebu king.[2] These threats were carried into action in 1706, when Sir Dalby fought the Asebu supporters of Arhin Pampa. In spite of the opposition of other English traders on the coast to Sir Dalby's plans, which proved expensive and a hindrance to English trade, the General did not yield. In pursuance of his aggressive policy he suggested that the Royal African Company should have about 100 well-armed 'negroes to keep the blacks in subjection'.[3] That the English power over Fetu grew tremendously during the seven years of Sir Dalby's generalship cannot be denied. This is clearly illustrated by the conditions under which Queen Aguaba Brafo was installed. She had to promise to allow the English to levy a 20 per cent toll on the fish, corn, and yams of her subjects. Sir Dalby was so proud of his own achievements in this state that in 1708 he enthusiastically reported that he had granted permission for people to settle at Cimbi, in Fetu, and optimistically hoped to bring other states under the English in a similar way.[4]

[1] T70/1643, Cape Coast Journal, 12 and 17 Apr. 1704. It is not clear why the king of Asebu and John Kabes of Komenda should be consulted to elect a king for Fetu. It may be inferred that by now Fetu had lost all power to the English, who now relied on their African advisers.

[2] T70/1463, Entry dated 6 June 1704.

[3] T70/5, Sir Dalby Thomas to R.A.C., 1 May 1706; Davies, op. cit., p. 284; H. A. Wyndham, *Atlantic and Slavery*, p. 30.

[4] T70/1463, Cape Coast Castle Memo., 12 Apr. 1708.

As long as the energetic Sir Dalby lived and provided the necessary incentives and threats to the local rulers, they tended to defer to the wishes of the English. When, for instance, in 1708 Kwamina Coffee of Kabestera was reported to be molesting traders from the interior, the queen of Fetu sought Thomas's permission to attack him. The General ordered that Kwamina Coffee should be seized and brought to Cape Coast.[1] The execution of such orders, as must be expected, was bound to increase local tensions, and it needed the continuous support of a superior force to back up such struggles.

It was not only in Fetu that people resented the rulership of Aguaba Brafo; the immediately neighbouring kings also bore a grudge against her. Thus, when in 1711 the death of Sir Dalby Thomas left her short of help, the queen became powerless and vulnerable on all sides. In 1711 the Fante fell on Fetu and devastated the country simply because 'the Fetuers are in the company's interest'.[2] After Sir Dalby's death the struggle between the pro-Dutch and pro-English factions threw the country into confusion. In 1717, for instance, there was a civil war in which 'those officers and others that were in the Co's [English] interest were destroyed' by the pro-Dutch faction, which installed a new Dey, said to have been in Holland and to have formerly lived at Elmina.[3] The English, however, would not concede defeat to the Dutch, but hired the Fante to fight Fetu in 1720.[4]

Nor were Sir Dalby Thomas's activities confined only to Fetu. Although he was not as successful in Agona as he was in Fetu, his action thus affords clear testimony of European interference in local politics. When one Wireko, formerly in the service of the English at Winneba, invited the Dutch to Senya Breku, the English dispatched an armed force to seize him and to dislodge the Dutch. Although the attempt miscarried, Sir Dalby continued to issue threats, and even attempted unsuccessfully to hire Fante and Akwamu troops to fight Agona. All pressures on the queen of Agona to 'remove the Dutch from Sanya'[5] were unavailing until 1707, when Sir Dalby

[1] T70/1463, Cape Coast Castle Memo., 21 Oct. 1704.

[2] T70/5/74, Abstract of Letters from Cape Coast Castle to R.A.C., 19 Jan. 1711.

[3] T70/6/48, J. Phipps and R. Bleau to R.A.C., 6 Feb. 1717; T70/6/84, J. Phipps and R. Bleau to R.A.C., 6 Feb. 1717.

[4] T70/7/12, Phipps and Dodson to R.A.C., 2 Nov. 1720; T70/7/18, Phipps and Dodson to R.A.C., 8 Apr. 1721.

[5] T70/379, Cape Coast Castle Journal, 30 Apr. 1707.

succeeded in negotiating a highly favourable agreement with the queen, by which 'the said Queen and Cabaceros and people agreed that none in her town or other places in her dominions shall treat directly or indirectly or have any commerce either by themselves or others with any factory of any nation'.[1]

Although European attempts at political control did not have any spectacular effect on the Gold Coast as a whole, it cannot be denied that they disrupted the day-to-day activities of the states concerned. Compared with the preceding centuries, it was the seventeenth century that witnessed great European political activity on the Gold Coast. Admittedly the Portuguese had early in their career made Elmina independent of the kings of both Eguafo and Fetu, but Portuguese interference in local affairs was made less effective by their small numbers. That they did not carry on their policy further than they did at Elmina was not out of a desire to abstain from local politics, but because they were not equipped for such a job. However, the Dutch and the English who followed them were better equipped, and much more interested in the immediate economic exploitation of the Gold Coast than the Portuguese, whose eyes were more turned towards the riches of Asia.

Starting from a policy of cautious non-involvement in local affairs, the European traders gradually came to play a decisive role in the politics of the states along the coast. First acting the part of 'honest brokers' in settling local disputes, the English and the Dutch, in particular, did not hesitate to foster dissension and even to use outright force to maintain their interests. By the end of the seventeenth century, the English were recommending the Dutch methods as the best in the context of the Gold Coast trade, namely 'to hire other nations to fall upon them that are false, and to cut them to pieces'.[2] Admittedly the Dutch were the first to seek to control local affairs by levying tolls on Axim, Elmina, Komenda, and Asebu. It is also true that the Dutch claimed to have inherited a monopoly over the whole of the Gold Coast by their defeat of the Portuguese, and that therefore, whenever they considered their rights threatened, they took all measures not excluding war to protect them. Their insistence on these rights was the cause of many disputes. By their interference in local affairs many of the flourishing towns were depopulated,

[1] T70/44, Thomas to R.A.C., 27 May 1707; Wyndham, *Atlantic and Slavery*, p. 26.

[2] T70/536, Sir Dalby Thomas to R.A.C., Oct. 1705.

because the citizens fled to safer places. By 1702, for instance, Elmina's population had been reduced from about 12,000 to about 10,000 inhabitants.[1]

An English report of 1714, uncharitable though it appears, well illustrates the state of dependency to which the Komenda kings had been reduced as a result of the frequent wars. It was noted that 'the king of Aguafo live upon the charity of the Dutch and had not a slave to wait upon him'.[2] It was not only at Aguafo that such a situation obtained, but also at Fetu and Axim it was the Europeans who decided many important issues; even at Elmina the caboceers had to refer all weighty decisions to the Dutch Director-General.

In the struggle to control the local people the English were not prepared to allow themselves to be outpaced by the Dutch; it was their underhand dealings in the Dutch–Komenda war that prolonged the struggle. What is more, it was they who committed the greatest political blunder by their callous murder of the king of Komenda in 1698, which immediately resulted in another war with the Komenda and for a long time created suspicion in the minds of the African rulers. The effect on the local people was clearly summed up by Kwamina Coffee of Kabestera, who refused to come into Cape Coast Castle on the grounds that he too might suffer the same fate as 'Grate [*sic*] Tagee himself who was a great friend of the English'. But unlike the Dutch, who made it an avowed policy to get control over local affairs, the English depended more on the personality and character of their governors. It was the ambitious and forceful Sir Dalby Thomas whose drive brought English actions in line with the Dutch, and the fact that the policy of interference in local affairs was not actively pursued after his death in 1711 was because his successors were weak. Apart from personal weaknesses, the policy of a joint directorate adopted by the English after Sir Dalby's death made it difficult for any one person to carry on expensive projects. On the whole, judging from the activities of the Dutch and the English companies between 1629 and 1720, the assertion that the Europeans adopted abstentionist policies with regard to local politics is not borne out by the facts.

[1] N.B.K.G. 58/6, W. de la Palma and Council, 17 June 1702.
[2] T70/3/100, G. Gore, Phipps, and Bleau to R.A.C., 23 Mar. 1714.

# CHAPTER V

# The Rise of the New Class

ONE of the most significant developments on the Gold Coast in the seventeenth century was the new openings for commercial, political, and social advancement that directly resulted from the concentration of peoples and forts along the coast. Coastal towns and villages, hitherto unimportant, became centres of a flourishing trade, and soon assumed a cosmopolitan outlook. There were people who came to the towns to sell their commodities and then returned to their states, and there were others who had nothing but their services and skills to sell. The acquisition of a common trading language threw up a new class of middlemen who acted as a liaison between African and European traders. Side by side with the new class was the emergence of a new group of people—the mulattoes, who were the direct progeny of European traders and African women.

The Europeans on the coast seem, however, to have placed very little confidence in the mulattoes, whom they regarded as possessing 'whatever is in its own nature worse in the Europeans and the Negroes—[and] . . . the sink of both'.[1] Such a description is obviously an exaggeration, for without doubt some mulattoes did combine the virtues of both races and rose to positions of trust in the service of the European companies. Others exercised wide influence in the towns that sprang up around the forts and castles. It must be admitted, however, that the mulattoes were never a decisive factor in the Gold Coast trade as they were in the Senegambia region;[2] but their role can be understated.

Difficulties arise in establishing the exact nationalities of most of the people whose names appear in the European records. The writers tended to 'Europeanize' the names of some of the Africans with whom they traded and those in their service, while some of the Africans fancifully assumed European names. A typical example may be found in the two ambassadors of the king of Asebu who were sent to the United Provinces in 1611. They are simply called Marinho

[1] Bosman, *A New and Accurate Description*, p. 119; Astley, *Collections*, p. 634.

[2] W. Rodney, 'African Slavery and other forms of Social Oppression . . .', *J.A.H.* vii. 431–43.

and Carvalho, and may equally have been mulattoes or full-blooded Africans. The latter died at Elmina in 1659, where he was 'held in great respect'.[1] In the 1640s the most influential caboceer at Elmina was a certain Henryco, who undertook several missions on behalf of the Dutch to the court of some local rulers. If one were to guess his nationality, one would doubtless place him as a mulatto of Portuguese origin. Reasonable though such a supposition appears, it would be rash to adhere too strongly to it, for, as has already been pointed out, it was not uncommon for pure Africans to assume European names, names of their favourite friends and masters. The name of one Affomba, popularly known as Ruychaver, may be cited as an example.[2] The records abound in names such as Jan and Hans Raposa, who may be classified among a group of Dutch and Portuguese mulattoes; also such names as Dr. Griffin and Peck are found in English records. The former's title places him in a category apart from the ordinary African, but his job and emolument make it difficult to know for certain his true identity. He is sometimes described as a relative of the king of Fetu, and judging from the class of people with whom his name was always mentioned, men like Peter Panin, Quansa, Quao, and Kwofie, who received not more than 8 ackies (£1 sterling) per month, Dr. Griffin is more likely to have been a pure African than a mulatto.[3]

There were others, like Geelendonck, who rose to a factor's position in 1647, whose identities could not be hidden; he was a pure mulatto. In the difficult days when the Dutch and the English were struggling to establish themselves in Fetu, it was his efforts that secured the place for the Dutch.[4] That Geelendonck should succeed in winning Cape Coast for the Dutch must be seen as a reflection of the importance attached to the influence of mulattoes as negotiators at critical times. In the Dutch struggle with John Konny of Ahanta between 1718 and 1724, for instance, they worked through a Dutch mulatto, Bosman, who was in Konny's service.[5] It is difficult not to conclude that the eventual Dutch success in driving away Konny in 1724 was due to this Bosman's help.

[1] Valckenburg's Diary, 14 Feb. 1659.

[2] Ratelband, *São Jorge da Mina*, pp. 49, 267.

[3] T70/368, Nov. 1682, T70/380, 22 Feb. 1714, T70/1463, 16 Dec. 1704. Cape Coast Castle Memo. and Account Books. T70/374, 28 Aug. 1697: Dr. Griffin was given 1 sheet, 1 English carpet, among other things, to bury his mother.

[4] O.W.I.C. 11, 18 Feb. 1645; Ratelband, op. cit., p. 267.

[5] W.I.C. 463, From Council of X to W. Butler, 27 Dec. 1718.

The most important and influential of all the seventeenth-century mulattoes was Edward Barter, who was virtually the ruler of Cape Coast by the end of the century. A man of Anglo-African parentage, Barter had the rarest of good fortune in being educated in England. He arrived in London between 1690 and 1691; there his education, which consisted of reading and writing, was sponsored by the Royal African Company.[1] In 1693 he returned to the coast and was employed by the English on an annual salary of £30, though by 1699 his surety in the sum of £1,000 was still outstanding.[2]

Barter's main duty appears to have been to collect debts owing to the English from the Africans. He was constantly reminded to persuade 'Little Tagee', king of Eguafo, to pay his debts; and to refrain from trading privately to the detriment of the English.[3] Described as a principal man, it is difficult to understand how he would be able to maintain himself solely on an annual emolument of £30. Barter was not long in realizing that he would be better off if he set up a private business. Although by 1700 he was to all intents and purposes a private man, the evidence suggests that he did not forget his obligation to his benefactors, the English, and worked continuously to help the English company. With long and permanent residence at Cape Coast he had better experience than the ever-changing English personnel. But far from using it mainly for his own ends he placed his knowledge at the disposal of the English and was consulted in all commercial and political matters.

Barter's power and wealth may be guessed from his aristocratic way of life. He built himself a miniature fort on which he proudly hoisted the English flag and mounted a few cannon. At the height of his fame and power all trade that passed through Cape Coast was conducted through him.[4] He also had at his command a well-armed personal army composed of his slaves and freemen, which was used to help the English whenever possible. In 1699, for instance, it was through the efforts of his men that Anomabo fort was relieved from the hands of the Fante.[5] It was also through Barter's instrumentality that the English maintained their establishment at Fetu at the turn of the century, for his closer identity with the local caboceers was a great advantage. In 1700 Barter was given as much

[1] T70/50, R.A.C. to Cape Coast Castle, 29 Oct. 1691; 4 Oct. 1692.
[2] T70/51, R.A.C. to Cape Coast Castle, 29 Aug. 1699.
[3] T70/51, R.A.C. to Ned Barter, 29 Aug. 1699.
[4] Bosman, op. cit., p. 45; Barbot, op. cit., p. 444.
[5] T70/376, Cape Coast Castle to R.A.C., 21 Dec. 1699.

as twenty-nine gallons of brandy 'to be distributed among the caboceers' to maintain them in the English interest.

Barter's services and influence ended with the arrival of Sir Dalby Thomas as Agent-General of the coast. Although Sir Dalby was enjoined to cultivate the friendship of the local kings and influential people, he could not brook an over-mighty ally in the immediate neighbourhood of his castle. Conflicts between him and Barter therefore became frequent—Sir Dalby always pressing Barter for all debts owed to the company and trying to curtail his trade with interlopers. The last two years of Barter's life saw him a fugitive at the court of Komenda[1] But his departure from Cape Coast did not end the struggle over his life. For his activities on the coast, it was demanded that he be repatriated to England on the grounds that he was a naturalized Englishman. Barter eluded the English because such an influential person was sure of a ready welcome wherever he went. The Dutch readily welcomed him at Komenda and disregarded all English protests and requests to hand him over. Although the Council of Ten asked that Barter be expelled from Elmina, the company's representatives on the coast would not comply with the wishes of their Directors. When he eventually settled at Komenda Barter still considered himself a friend of the Dutch, whom he made the executors of his will, with the king of Komenda as his legatee. Even after his death in 1704 it remained a problem as to how to dispose of Barter's property.[2]

The life and career of Edward Barter was a unique example of the power which some of the mulattoes exerted on local affairs. Though there were many of his kind, few had his advantages of education and wealth. Some were employed in minor positions as soldiers and middlemen, but on the whole the era of mulatto influence on trade and politics on the Gold Coast had not dawned.

The greatest problem that faced the Europeans was the education of the mulatto children, and how best to replenish their ever-dwindling corps of personnel and improve the efficiency of the companies' servants. Had there been a concerted attempt to convert people to Christianity, it is likely that formal education by the missionaries would have been the by-product of such a policy,

[1] W.I.C. 917, W. de la Palma to the X, 18 Jan. 1701, Oct. 1703; N.B.K.G. 58/f. 81, Report from Elmina to the X, 1703.

[2] T70/377, Cape Coast Castle to R.A.C., 7 Jan. 1704; W.I.C. 917, W. de la Palma to X, 31 Aug. 1704. For more about Barter, see Barbot, op. cit., pp. 444 f.

but whatever the original motives for saving African souls may have been, commerce and exploitation soon submerged, if they did not completely obliterate them. From the early beginnings references were made to baptisms and the erection of chapels in Fetu by the Portuguese, but soon any Christian motives that survived were confined to the castle at Elmina. In 1503 Diogo d'Alvarenga had recommended that High Mass should be celebrated at least fortnightly at Fetu.[1] But fifty-two years later the available evidence suggests that the Christian religion had been relegated to the background of Portuguese activities. In 1555 Martin Frobisher observed at Elmina that 'there is no other priest nor preacher to convert or instruct anyone of the Christian faith'.[2] One would expect the Portuguese to have shown a higher enthusiasm for religious work at Elmina, which was their headquarters, and since this was lacking at the main fort it would be too much to expect any such enthusiasm at the outposts. After one and a half centuries of Portuguese occupation, only 800 inhabitants in the immediate vicinity of Elmina were Christians by the 1620s.[3]

This situation was in no way improved by the arrival of many European trading companies on the Gold Coast in the seventeenth century. Although Barbot's remark about the Dutch and other European companies as regards their evangelical activities is obviously an overstatement, it was broadly true, certainly at the time when he was on the coast. He observed that the great concern of the Dutch on this coast as well as all the Europeans was the gold, and not the welfare of the people's souls.[4] There were times, nevertheless, when efforts were made to convert and to educate the offspring of the Europeans and, indirectly, of the Africans.

From the beginning of their career on the Gold Coast, the Dutch considered it important to appoint chaplains to the Gold Coast to minister to the spiritual needs of their Dutch personnel, but these were not to concern themselves with the Africans. Nothing is known of the outcome of the work of Wilhemeus Laijrelius, who was appointed chaplain to Fort Nassau at Moure, in 1628.[5] In 1634, however, a school for the education of both European and African

[1] Blake, *Europeans in West Africa 1450–1560* i. 92.

[2] Ibid., p. 360.

[3] Boxer, *Race Relations in the Portuguese Colonial Empire 1415–1825*, pp. 7 12; Debrunner, *A History of Christianity in Ghana*, pp. 27–32.

[4] Barbot, op. cit., p. 157.

[5] O.W.I.C. 20, f. 85, Resolutions of the States-General, 25 July 1628.

children was reported to have been set up at Moure. Instruction was to be in Dutch, and the children were to be taught the Christian religion. But the whole experiment was written off as a failure, because of lack of enthusiasm on the part of Africans and mulattoes alike. The teacher was also charged with the responsibility of a surgeon, and in the 1630s nothing more was heard of the plan.[1] Eleven years were to elapse before anything was heard of another plan to set up a school on the Gold Coast. The sincerity of the Dutch in planning this school leaves one in grave doubts. If they had been really interested in such an undertaking, one would have expected that the school would have been established at a place where there were many Dutch and African children. Granting that the failure of the plan at Moure ruled out that town, either Elmina, or Axim, which had come into Dutch hands by 1642, would have been the most obvious choice. But this school was to be at Accra, a place where both the Dutch and the English were struggling to establish themselves. The most obvious explanation for proposing Accra as the centre for the school was to curry favour with the king. It is therefore not surprising that the plan never proceeded beyond mere suggestion.[2]

Apart from these two unsuccessful attempts, the Dutch said nothing about the establishment of a school throughout the seventeenth century. Chaplains and preachers continued to come from Holland, but their religious functions appear to have been limited to ministering to their countrymen. In the middle of the century the problem that caught the attention of the preachers was how best to prevent the procreation of mulatto children. But appeals that wives should be allowed to accompany their husbands to the coast, and that spinsters should be induced to come to the coast, fell on deaf ears. The problem remained unsolved. If anything, the mulatto population appears to have increased. Efforts to prevent the Dutch from bringing African women into the forts and the cruisers went unheeded, and judging from the number of times when the instructions had to be reissued, one can say that even attempts to get the Europeans to attend church services were unsuccessful. A compromise solution was hit upon which asked all Dutchmen who had

[1] O.W.I.C. 11/2, From Fort Nassau to XIX, 3 Feb. 1634.

[2] O.W.I.C. 9/159, Letter from XIX to Elmina, 14 Jan. 1644; Debrunner, op. cit., pp. 35–8. I have not as yet discovered anything about the school for Elmina in 1641.

children by African women to send them to Holland so that they might not mingle with the Africans and degenerate into heathenism.[1] This surely indicates that the failure to establish a school had come to be accepted as a matter of course.

The English also unsuccessfully attempted to establish a school to train people for their service to act as liaison officers between them and the inland rulers. Such men, it was noted, would be able to read and write letters for the inland potentates.[2] In addition to performing such errands, educated Africans could find employment in the forts to supplement the ever-diminishing European servants. It was with such aims in view that in 1693 one John Chiltman was appointed a teacher to Cape Coast Castle. But this project, which has been seen as an expression of the company's sense of responsibility towards the inhabitants of the towns, was soon abandoned.[3] During the period of Sir Dalby Thomas's generalship on the coast, no such institution was founded at Cape Coast, and African boys needing education were sent to England.[4] Another attempt by the English to set up a school at Cape Coast in 1711 was abandoned a year later when the school teacher died.[5]

The lack of facilities for formal education on the Gold Coast affected the quality of the servants employed by the European companies. Children who were lucky found themselves in Europe, where they acquired a smattering of education, but more often than not the local middlemen and their mulatto counterparts contented themselves with learning the 'bastard Portuguese' which was employed in commercial transactions. But although the art of writing was an ideal qualification, it was not a *sine qua non* of successful trade on the coast; indeed most of the Europeans in the companies' service were themselves virtually uneducated, and it would therefore be too much to expect such people to show much interest in an art which they did not possess.[6] In spite of their inability to read and write, the African traders were as diligent as they were efficient in

[1] W.I.C. 124, Regulations of Director-General J. Smidt and Council, 23 June 1693; W.I.C. 917, Instructions to the forts, Dec. 1702; N.B.K.G. 234, Regulations drawn by Council, 16 May 1702. According to Bosman the preacher was next in rank to the Director-General (op. cit., p. 98).

[2] T70/5/f. 2, Abstract of Letters from Cape Coast to R.A.C., 21 Sept. 1750.

[3] T70/50/139, Oct. 1694; Davies, op. cit., p. 280; Astley, *Collections*, p. 600.

[4] T70/378, Cape Coast Journal, 4 Feb. 1704.

[5] T70/50/139, R.A.C. to Cape Coast Castle, 1694; Davies, op. cit., p. 280.

[6] Bosman, op. cit., p. 94.

conducting their trade. They amassed appreciable sums of money and became what could be described as successful businessmen, who served as a vital link between the coast and the inland states. Side by side with the independent and semi-independent local traders, there also grew up a class that became very much attached to the European companies. These were men who found permanent employment with the European companies, and enjoyed a status never before known in Gold Coast society; namely, that of men who received regular and fixed salaries for their services.

For the building of the European forts and castles African labour, both unskilled and semi-skilled, was in great demand. There was the need for masons, carpenters, bricklayers, and other such men, in the same way as there was the demand for men to man the fleet of canoes which served as the most efficient and reliable means of communication between the European forts. In fact not infrequently there was the need to have some influential Africans not merely to communicate between the forts and the courts of African kings, but to go on missions to Europe to lend weight to the requests of the European representatives on the coast, as the two ambassadors from Asebu did for the Dutch in 1611. In 1659 one Accada undertook a similar mission to Holland on behalf of the Dutch. Barbot also asserts that in the 1670s the king of Komenda sent one Kukumi to France to try and induce the French to establish a fort at Little Komenda.[1] Such men obviously gained much abroad, and returned home to exercise great influence in their own society.

Local industries such as canoe-building, which facilitated the new form of trade, were also boosted. Canoes were required by the European companies not only for inter-town communications on the Gold Coast, but also for the trade on the Slave Coast.[2] It was to command such flotillas of canoes belonging to the companies that men such as Peter Panin and Coffee, 'caboceers of canoemen', received their monthly payments.[3] Side by side with the new demand was also the need for canoes for fishing. Wealthy and enterprising

[1] De Jonge, op. cit., pp. 14 & 63 Valckenburg's Journal, 1659; T70/368/75, 23 Feb. 1683.

[2] For the uses made of canoes by the Africans see Astley, *Collections*, p. 589. The most important towns for the canoe industry were Axim, Boutry, Takoradi, Komenda, Kormantse, and Winneba. According to Barbot 'the natives there make . . . great numbers of them yearly'. He asserts further that the Elmina fishermen took canoes to as far as Angola (Barbot, op. cit., p. 266).

[3] T70/378, From Cape Coast Castle to R.A.C., 9 Feb. 1703; T70/380, Feb. 1714; N.B.K.G. 69, W. de la Palma to the X, 10 June 1702.

local merchants, like John Kabes and John Konny, who owned a fleet of canoes profited by running a canoe-hire service.[1]

Other people found employment with the companies as gold takers and interpreters, either in the forts or in the cruisers. In 1683, for instance, there was one Amo, 'a black gold taker', who received $4\frac{1}{2}$ ackies per month.[2] Company servants who proved to be faithful were not infrequently promoted to positions as gold takers. In 1703 two servants of the English, Coffee and Brabo, were posted to Accra and on the *Mary Brigantine* respectively as gold takers.[3]

By far the most enterprising and daring of the companies' servants were those who may be described in modern parlance as the advertising agents or market researchers. Not only were they to popularize the European goods and to induce inland traders to trade with their employers, but it was these agents who watched the trend of demand by the consumers. Combined with their commercial duties was their political role as negotiators for peace and concord between the various African states whose quarrels disrupted the flow of trade. The records are full of such names as Afra Yanka, Dr. Griffin, Hansico, Aban, Pieter Passop, Affo, and Anim. In 1683 Captain Quao, a servant of the English, who received fifteen gallons of brandy for 'his expense in passing through the up-country for encouragement of trade'. A year before, Hansico had spent about sixty days in Fetu in settling disputes.[4]

There is no doubt that some of the men employed in the capacity of negotiators depended on their family connections, but most of them rose to positions of trust by virtue of their honesty and diligence. Hansico was a nephew of the king of Fetu (and understandably spent a long time in that state in settling a dispute between Fetu and Akani). However, men like Quamino and Affado could not boast of high connections. They were simply described as 'company slaves', and yet in the struggles over Aguaba Brafo, the queen who was imposed on Fetu by Sir Dalby Thomas, it was they who went about the neighbouring states to persuade the dissatisfied rulers to accept the choice.[5] As far back as 1676 Aban of Elmina had also used his

[1] T70/368/75, Cape Coast Castle Journal, 23 Feb. 1683; Barbot, in Churchill, *Collections* v. 266. T70/378, 9 Feb. 1703; T70/380, Feb. 1714; N.B.K.G. 69, W. de la Palma to X, 10 June 1702.

[2] T70/368, Cape Coast Accounts Book, 23 June 1683.

[3] T70/1463/10, Cape Coast Castle Memo., 12 Feb. 1703.

[4] T70/368/85, Cape Coast Castle Journal, 15 Mar. 1683; T70/367/208, Cape Coast Castle Journal, 22 Aug. 1682.

[5] T70/1463, Cape Coast Castle Memo., 6 July, 16 Dec. 1704.

influence to conduct similar missions for the Dutch. It was through his timely warning that the Dutch managed to salvage their goods from the lodge at Takoradi in the Ahanta and Adom struggles in 1683.[1] Described as a great broker, Aban fell on evil days during the generalship of Staphorst. He was imprisoned for debt, and spent the last days of his life at Cape Coast in the service of the English.[2] Another influential Dutch broker was Accameny, the brother of the king of Eguafo. In 1695 he was exiled to Surinam for allegedly helping Komenda against the Dutch.[3]

In their services as ambassadors of peace at the beginning of the eighteenth century, Affo and Pieter Passop were unexcelled. In the political confusion caused by the Asante defeat of Denkyira in 1701, trade virtually came to a standstill; and the scares of war lay thick in the air. It therefore became necessary for the European companies to send their servants further into the interior to persuade the traders to come to the coast. Affo, who had served the Dutch for more than twenty years, proved a very resourceful and able negotiator. In 1702 he undertook a successful mission through Fetu, Abrembo, and Akani into Asante to 'encourage traders' and to contact van Nyendaal, the Dutch resident at Kumasi.[4] But Pieter Passop's services were exceptionally beneficial to the Dutch.

Passop had connections with the Akwamu royal house. Sometimes described as a broker and on other occasions simply as a company servant, he was employed on diplomatic, commercial, and military missions. His high connections made him an ideal ambassador to the court of the African chiefs. In 1693 Passop was a member of the delegation sent by the Dutch to persuade the Akwamu king, Basua, not to hand over Christiansborg Castle to any nation other than the Danish or the Dutch.[5] There is no doubt that Passop played a very important role in persuading the Akwamu to return

[1] W.I.C. 124, N.B.K.G. 81, Director-General's Council Meeting, 3 Aug. 1683.

[2] W.I.C. 484/143, Report of General Sevenhuysen, 30 May 1701; T70/11/118 and 119, 6 Jan., 11 May 1696.

[3] W.I.C. 917, Report of W. de la Palma, Oct. 1703–Feb. 1704.

[4] N.B.K.G. 81, Elmina to the X, 14 Aug. 1693; Wilks, 'Akwamu and Otublohum', *Africa* 29. iv. (1959), 391–403. Wilks identifies Passop with Otu or Otu Aniakwa, who set up the Otublohum quarter of Accra. He is said to be an Akwamu Governor and the chief Dutch broker. It is difficult to believe that the representative of such a powerful state as Akwamu would lead a contingent of soldiers to such a distant place as Ahanta. Besides, he is said to be an Elmina caboceer in 1703.

[5] N.B.K.G. 81/14 Aug. 1963, J. Smit to the X

the fort to the Danes in 1693. In the negotiations that culminated in the Dutch–Akwamu agreement of 1703, Passop also played a prominent role. He acted as the interpreter of the Dutch delegation comprising van Branke and de Bois that went to the court of the Akwamu king.[1] He was also sent by the Dutch in 1703 to persuade the Akwamu king to send messengers to Whydah to collect outstanding tributes.

Originally based at Accra, Passop later moved to Elmina, where he was respected and feared in the whole neighbourhood. An incident in 1703 may illustrate the awe in which the 'black caboceer of Elmina' was held. In April 1703 the servant of Passop had his 'rowl [*sic*] of tabacoo . . .' seized by one of the local traders at Cape Coast. Passop's threats to march his men on Cape Coast caused great consternation, in which the elders of the town asked the help of Sir Dalby Thomas, the English Agent-General.[2] It was the timely return of the sequestered article which staved off an attack. The Dutch, aware of his connections and importance, treated him with respect, and pinned their hopes for good trade on Passop, 'our great broker who is respected and feared by the natives'. They counted his courage in war as well as his connections with the Akwamu court among the factors which won him respect throughout the country. His military prowess was also acknowledged by other people from far and near, as was well shown in 1711 during the time of the Anglo-Dutch attacks on John Konny.

It is true that there were equally influential people who could have led a contingent of Elmina soldiers, but it was felt that Passop would command better respect and obedience from the soldiers. In fact Appre, the Axim caboceer, through whose activities the war with Konny had come about, was insistent that the soldiers should first be made to drink fetish (swear the oath of allegiance) to Pieter Passop.[3] That the Dutch also had great confidence in the faithfulness of the man is seen from the fact that Passop was the only person on the list of debtors on whom the Dutch commented favourably; they described him as 'trustworthy' and his debt as 'recoverable'.[4]

[1] N.B.K.G. 69/2, J. van Branke and W. de Bois's report on mission to Akwamu, 22 March 1703.

[2] T70/1463, Cape Coast Castle Memo., Apr. 1703; W.I.C. 484/237, Elmina Journal, Oct. 1703; N.B.K.G. 59, Elmina Journal, May 1705.

[3] W.I.C. 124, Letter from Axim to Elmina, 14 Dec. 1711; W.I.C. 124, Expenses of the War against John Konny, 17 Aug. 1711.

[4] W.I.C. 484, Outstanding Debts, Aug. 1697, Sept. 1704.

Despite his privileged social status, Passop remained one of the several men who devoted a good deal of their time to the European companies they served. Unlike others who set up their own private concerns, Passop appears to have been a faithful servant, and to have enjoyed his new position as a salaried man. His position was higher than that of men like Captain Quao, Quacuba, Hanseco, and others, who only received an ackie (5*s*.) a week from the English and enjoyed bonuses on specific duties they successfully performed. In 1682, for instance, Dr. Griffin received 14 ackies 'for his expense in going to Fanti on the company's business'.[1] It was obviously from such payments that, in 1680, the same Griffin was able to provide accommodation for the queen of Komenda and her entourage when they visited Cape Coast. Even without the bonuses, it cannot be denied that a regular monthly salary of £1 sterling (4 ackies) in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries offered the recipients a special economic and social position in coastal society.

In addition to the new group of salaried men, an important development was the rise of the 'merchant princes'. Almost all of them served their apprenticeship in one form or another in the service of the European traders. There were others, none the less, who appear to have set themselves up independently of the Europeans. They became powerful and influential enough to exert far-reaching influence on the political and economic life of their states and even on others beyond their immediate neighbourhood. The lives and careers of men like the Akrosan brothers—John Ahenakwa and John Claessen (Cloyce)—Asomani, John Kabes, and John Konny may be cited as fairly typical of the age. These were the products of the Afro-European confrontation on the coast.

The Akrosan brothers wielded both economic and political power in Fetu between 1640 and 1662. At one time or another the European traders mistook one or other of them for king of Fetu. The elder brother, Ahenakwa, died in 1656, leaving Claessen the *de facto* ruler until 1662. Nothing is known about their early lives, but by the 1640s they were powerful enough to challenge Dutch attempts to make Fetu the economic backwater of Asebu and Komenda. Because of the nearness of Cape Coast to both Elmina and Moure, the Dutch at one time decided to concentrate their commercial activities in

[1] T70/368, Cape Coast Account Book, Nov. 1682; T70/365, Cape Coast Account Book, Jan. 1680. Bosman asserts that in his time twopence could be used in a day: op. cit., p. 123.

the two places where they already possessed forts. The policy meant that traders from Fetu had to carry their commodities to Moure or Elmina; it also meant that Cape Coast would miss the prestige attached to the erection of European forts, and so the Akrosan brothers refused to accept the Dutch plans.

Known at first as friends of the Dutch, they were suspected of having invited the English to Cape Coast in the 1640s.[1] Their earlier attempts to eliminate Dutch influence were unsuccessful, but they persisted until the 1650s, when their efforts were well rewarded. They found a ready ally for their plans in Hendrick Carloff, one-time factor of the Dutch West India Company, who returned to the coast in 1650 in the service of the Swedish African Company. A veteran trader on the Gold Coast, Carloff, a personal friend of the two brothers, was well aware of their discontent, and concentrated his efforts on Fetu. In 1650 Carloff entered into an agreement with Bodema, king of Fetu, in which the coast was ceded to the Swedish company. The names of the two brothers feature prominently in the agreement; Ahenakwa is styled as the heir presumptive, and Claessen as the Dey or chief minister.[2] With the assistance of the brothers a Swedish lodge made of swish was built in that year.

Even before the arrival of Carloff, Ahenakwa's influence had overshadowed that of the king. When a friend of General Ruychaver, one Fordii, was carried away to Ahenakwakrom (Ahenakwa's town) in 1642, the Dutch General's presentations to the Fetu king could not avail him anything, and the Dutch had to go to Ahenakwakrom, about two miles away from the coast, with a present of a live cow, to beg Ahenakwa to release the man. Described as a 'proud rough but rich Black', he was said to have about 400 armed men at his command.[3]

The respect accorded the two brothers by both the European and African traders is well reflected in the type of presents which were given to them in 1652. In that year, when traders from Akani were seeking permission to establish themselves in Fetu, they seem to have placed greater store on the goodwill of the brothers than on that

[1] Ratelband, op. cit., p. 267; O.W.I.C. 11/45, Report of Hoogenhoek, 25 Nov. 1646. This asserts that it was the Akrosan brothers who invited the English to Cape Coast. But another report in 1646 suggests that they did not approve of the project. Ratelband, op. cit., p. 271.

[2] O.W.I.C. 13, Protest of H. Carloff to J. Valckenburg, May 1650; O.W.I.C. 13, Agreement between H. Carloff and Boedema, 28 May 1650.

[3] W.I.C. 58/33, From Director-General Ruychaver to XIX, 1642.

of the king. Oten Agyei (Otin Adje), the Akani leader, and his men offered such fine and valuable presents as Benin cloths and liquor worth about 29 bendas (£232) to the Akrosan brothers, whilst the king received only £18 worth of presents.[1] Since virtually all the inland traders coming to and from Fetu were controlled by these men, the European companies were ready to do everything to win their favour. The Dutch were prepared to pay Ahenakwa one ounce of gold every month 'in the hope of getting him and his brother John Claessen, in due time on our side'. Their town, Ahenakwakrom, was frequently visited by the rival trading companies.

After 1656, when Ahenakwa died, John Claessen became the most important single person in Fetu. Although at one time he could have been the king, he was anxious to preserve his position as a successful trader and therefore refused to be made king.[2] This was because being a king would have made it impossible for him to carry on his trade. In addition to the added responsibilities that kingship would have brought, custom forbade the king of Fetu to see the sea, and since the European traders were on the coast, he would have been prevented from day-to-day contact with them. Nor could he have been sure that anybody to whom he entrusted his business would have discharged it satisfactorily. Claessen was therefore said to have chosen somebody else from his family to rule in his stead. The importance of the traders on the coast is clearly seen from Claessen's action. He refused to accept the highest political honour in his state, because he preferred his acquired position as a prosperous trader. Backed by his wealth, and the fact that, in all probability, his nephew or younger brother was to be the new ruler, Claessen was sure to wield great power in the state, where he was feared and respected by African and European traders alike. Indeed John Claessen was at times described as the most powerful person on the whole of the Guinea coast. It was due to his support that the Swedes and the Danes firmly established themselves at Fetu. In his dealings with these companies Claessen showed himself to be upright and just. He was anxious to do everything to advance the cause of his friends, because he reaped benefits in return by trading with them. It was on account of this that in 1658 Carloff, who had once again changed his allegiance from the Swedes to the Danes, was able to secure Cape

[1] O.W.I.C. 13, Valckenburg's Diary, 15 Oct. 1652.

[2] O.C. 2766, Cormantine Castle to the East India Company, 20 June 1659.

Coast for his new masters.[1] But once Claessen realized that he had been duped, as he did when Carloff suddenly turned against the Swedes, he did not hesitate to withdraw his support from such friends.

All would have been well had Carloff kept the fort stocked with a regular supply of trade goods, but, unable to keep his promise to send four or five ships a year to the coast, his company was reduced to great financial straits because it lacked enough goods. Apart from losing the customary payments on ships due to Claessen and the elders, the lack of trade goods diverted trade to other parts of the country. John Claessen took matters into his own hands, in an attempt to keep the establishment moving, by trading with interlopers instead, and regulating the affairs of the Danish fort by subjecting the inmates to his regulations; they had to seek his permission to absent themselves from the fort. All the servants of the company came under his control, and he even employed some of them on his corn plantations without pay. When at long last Commander Smidt decided to sell the fort to the Dutch,[2] Claessen refused to accept the validity of his action. His opposition to the Dutch lasted till his death in 1662.

As soon as the Dutch moved into the fort, John Claessen besieged it and forced them to surrender it to him.[3] For more than four years all the Europeans competed to secure the fort from him. Despite promises of large sums of money, Claessen's friendship with the Swedes dissuaded him from yielding to the tempting offers of other Europeans. The English East India Company, for instance, was prepared to offer Claesson presents to the value of £500 and to buy the fort for 1,000,[4] but Claessen assured them that he would only consider their offer if the Swedes failed to come to take possession of it. He went further than that, by sending a delegation of two, accompanied by a Swede, to Sweden to find out the company's intentions. In his letter to the Swedish company Claessen gave reasons why he helped Carloff to take the fort from them, recounted the circumstances which had forced him to capture the fort from the Dutch, and

[1] Birmingham, 'A note on the Kingdom of Fetu', *GNQ* 9 (1966); Müller, *Fetu*, pp. 10–11; O.W.I.C. 5a, Valckenburg to XIX, 17 Apr. 1658.

[2] O.C. 2766, Cormantine Castle to E. India Company, 20 June 1659; W.I.C., Declaration of J. Valckenburg, 1659; Memorial from W.I.C. to the States-General, 22 Aug. 1662.

[3] O.C. 9766, Cormantine Castle to E.I.C., 20 June 1659.

[4] O.C. 2859, From E.I.C. to Cormantine Castle, 30 Nov. 1660.

requested the Swedes to send a ship to the coast to take possession of Cape Coast.[1] True to his word, Claessen handed over the fort to the Swedes.

Although he considered himself to have been deceived by the Danes led by Carloff, Claessen was not prejudiced against them. When in 1661 the Swedes seized a Danish ship, it was he who quickly came to the aid of the injured party. Primarily a trader, John Claessen was interested in promoting conditions which were conducive to trade. Tez's description of the man as one who favoured no one, but who was keenly interested in what he considered to be just, sums up his true character. Little wonder then that the Danes by 1660 regarded him as 'father of all the whitemen at Cape Coast who are in the service of the King of Denmark'. In his desire to promote trade, John Claessen backed his words by force. He had at his disposal a fleet of war-canoes which he deployed to attack the Dutch in 1659, and he could command as many as 2,000 musket-armed soldiers. Although he had refused to be made king, it was he and not his nominee who wielded real power in Fetu. His influence spread beyond Cape Coast to as far west as Elmina, where in 1659, for instance, he was able to persuade the Akani traders not to have any trade with the Dutch, with whom he was at war. Without his help the gold trade could not be carried on at Cape Coast, for all the Akani traders had to do as he commanded. When the English factor at Anomabu sided with the Swedes against the Danes in 1658, Claessen's men drove the English from the place. To alienate Claessen was commercially unwise for any of the European traders. Smidt of the Danes described him as 'very rich and powerful', and said that they had to deal with 'no small fly'.[2]

Like most of the merchant princes of the Gold Coast, John Claessen combined crop farming with his commercial activities. In his struggle with the Dutch he would not bestir himself until he had finished with planting his corn. His death, in 1662, deprived Fetu and Cape Coast in particular of a great man. It was in Accra, Komenda, and Ahanta that such powerful traders were to be encountered between the 1670s and 1720s.

Another person whose life and career present many interesting

[1] States-General, Zueden 38, Enclosure Memorial from Silvercroon to States-General, 9 Dec. 1662; letter of Claessen, 29 May 1659.

[2] O.W.I.C. 5a. Valckenburg Journal, W.I.C. to States-General, 22 Aug. 1662.

facets was Asomani (Asemmani) of Akwamu. Said to have been first employed as a cook in the English forts at Accra,[1] after learning the 'white man's ways' he established himself as a trader at Accra, and acted as a broker for Akwamu traders who came there to trade with the Danes in Christiansborg. Later on Asomani was chosen to carry out Akwamu's revenge on the Danes. After successfully executing his orders he became the Akwamu Governor of the castle in 1693.

Akwamu–Danish estrangement had started at the end of the 1670s, when the latter assisted the Accra to foil an Akwamu attack on them. The Danes were never forgiven by the Akwamu; and in 1693 Asomani, who was familiar with their strength and weakness, led a group of eighty Akwamu men into the castle. The Akwamu deceived the Danes into believing that they had come to purchase firearms. By a clever ruse they were able to load the guns with bullets which had been 'concealed in the folds of their cloths'.[2] Their guns were quickly turned on the Danes, who soon surrendered; the Danish Governor escaped, but his less fortunate countrymen were led captives to Akwamu.

Asomani, now Governor of Christiansborg Castle, did all he could to induce European traders to accept the change of ownership by extending his friendship to all traders, not excluding interlopers. He saluted all ships which approached his castle 'with his cannon'. Captain Phillip, who dined with him in 1693, seems to have been much impressed by his comportment and his hospitality. Although his attempts to behave like the Danish Governor lent a ludicrous impression to his behaviour, he did what, in the circumstances of the time, he considered best. At dinner, instead of dressing as an Akwamu representative, Asomani is said to have donned the full dress of a Danish Governor. But while the new Governor was immensely enjoying the duties and rights of his new role, negotiations which were going on between the Akwamu capital and the Dutch were soon to deprive him of his position of honour.

In August 1693 the Dutch at Elmina asked the agents at Accra to investigate the possibilities of the sale of Christiansborg Castle by Akwamu, and promised to fulfil all the former obligations of the

[1] Phillips, op. cit. in Astley, *Churchill Collections*, vi. 211–13; Bosman, op. cit., letter v, p. 60; Ward, op. cit., pp. 93–5; Claridge, op. cit. i. 257.

[2] Wilks, 'The Rise of the Akwamu Empire', *T.H.S.G.* 3. ii (Achimota, 1957), 120–1.

Danes, namely, to pay the requisite rent. But the Akwamu king, Basua, would not part with his new acquisition; the furthest he would go was to allow the Danish captives in Akwamu to be ransomed, and to promise not to sell the castle to any European nation other than the Danes and the Dutch.[1] At least, however, Basua allowed himself to be persuaded into returning the castle to the Danes. In addition to the booty of goods and gold valued at about £1,600 sterling, the ransom price of the captives, the Akwamu capture of the castle brought over 100 marks of gold into the national treasury. Although the successful negotiation for the return of the castle ended Asomani's career as the Akwamu Governor, it was by no means the end of his active life on the coast.

Relying on the friendship and the contacts he had forged during the period of his public life, he set up his private business some years later at Labadi, a few miles from the castle he had commanded, and was able to divert Akwamu traders to himself, and thus to develop a lucrative trade with interlopers. In 1700 the Danes made an unsuccessful attempt to force him out of Labadi, but later representations to Ado, the new ruler, bore fruits. Pressure from the Akwamu court forced Asomani to move his business further east to Great Ningo.[2] It is uncertain whether it was further pressure from Akwamu that made him eventually wind up his business. What is known is that in 1703 he was the chief of Ouma, a town on the road to the Akwamu capital. His prosperity as a trader is reflected in the manner in which he lived. Asomani built himself a palace on which he mounted a few cannon, and when the occasion offered itself he appears to have indulged in his favourite pastime, as when he was the Akwamu Governor. On occasions he saluted prominent foreign visitors with a few cannon shots, as he did in 1703 to a visiting Dutch delegation on its way to the Akwamu king.[3] After 1704, Asomani disappears from the European records. It is certain that he remained influential and respected in his state throughout his life.[4] Asomani's

[1] N.B.K.G. 81, Instruction Elmina to Accra, 3–15 Aug. 1693.

[2] Wilks, 'Akwamu Empire', *T.H.S.G.* (1957), p. 122.

[3] N.B.K.G. 69, De Bois's Report of the Journey from Accra to Akwamu, 22 Mar. 1703.

[4] W.I.C. 484/278, Outstanding Debts, Sept. 1704. Asomani was said to be owing £10. To this day his exploits are remembered in Akwamu by a bunch of twenty keys he took from Christiansborg Castle, which still forms part of the royal treasures. Lawrence, op. cit., p. 416.

life and career were a mixture of public-spiritedness and private enterprise. Although he would have gained much from continuing with his trade, he was prepared to do as his ruler advised in order to bring about the greater good of his state. He sacrificed his private interest for the benefit of the lasting glory and influence of Akwamu.

# CHAPTER VI

# The Merchant Princes—John Kabes and John Konny

ONE of the greatest figures whose activities had far-reaching effects on the economic, social, and political life of the Gold Coast was John Kabes of Komenda. Ruler, trader, farmer, owner of lucrative salt pans, and a successful broker, his services were keenly sought for by both the English and the Dutch. At one time or another he served both companies. In the main, however, he remained independent. Of all his contemporaries, John Kabes's character is most difficult to analyse. His relations with the Europeans varied with each company and with each factor; and conflicting epithets like 'famous', 'dishonourable knave', 'ungrateful defrauder', 'serviceable', 'useful', 'faithful', and 'roguish', which have been used for him, were probably equally applicable and certainly applied.

Of his early life and career little is known. He was the nephew of one Aban, a great trader with the Dutch at Elmina. It is not unlikely that the uncle's influence might have been used to get Kabes in the employment of the Dutch. He is said to have enlisted in the Dutch army, but when and in what capacity is still unknown. By the 1680s, however, Kabes was already a leading trader in Komenda with whom the Dutch drove a roaring trade. In 1683, for instance, he was reported to have sold six slaves to the English. In 1695 Kabes invited the English to Komenda and provided them with accommodation in one of his villages.[1] That he was able to do this without the permission of the king shows how influential he was.

What led to the break between the Dutch and John Kabes is not known, but he is said to have instigated the Komenda in the attack on the Dutch miners which led to the Dutch–Komenda war. The war enhanced Kabes's importance and increased his influence in Komenda. This was because the general effect was to lead to the frequent enstoolment and destoolment of the kings. Instability and war reduced the power and wealth of the kings. In the midst of it all John Kabes carried on with his trade. He was obviously the most

[1] Bosman, op. cit., letter iii, p. 26.

important person in Komenda. From this period both the Dutch and the English competed for his goodwill. While the Dutch tried to renew their friendship with him, the English determined to maintain the favourable position which Kabes's invitation had offered them. Kabes was determined not to allow the Dutch to have much influence in Komenda. He therefore took practical steps to ensure that the English were well established in the state. He himself supervised the building of an English fort. The English liberally showered gifts on him so that the work would be finished in time. In 1697, for instance, he was given gallons of brandy 'to encourage him to look after our people and to forward the building of the fort'.[1] The Dutch regretted their rash action, which gave them 'a nice bone to pick . . . and injured trade'.[2] Through John Kabes's efforts, the English fort at Komenda was completed in 1698.

John Kabes's friendship with the English irritated the Dutch. Whilst the English counselled their factors to use the greatest circumspection in their dealings with Kabes, and even matched words with action by relieving Mr. Francia of his post as the factor at Komenda for insulting Kabes, the Dutch resorted to threats.[3] Dutch tactlessness is epitomized by the action of Bosman. By order of the Director-General, Jan van Sevenhuysen, Bosman was 'bent on shooting him [Kabes] with a pistol, which would have been done, but it went off in Bosman's pocket'.[4] Not unnaturally, therefore, John Kabes became afraid to come to Elmina. It was Willem de la Palma who realized that such behaviour was prejudicial to Dutch trade. He therefore adopted a much more conciliatory approach in an effort to win Kabes for the Dutch. That he failed in his attempts is borne out by the fact that John Kabes could not be persuaded to sign the agreement which was concluded with the king and five important people of Komenda in 1702.

Four years later the Dutch got an opportunity to deflect Kabes's attentions to their side. Because of the behaviour of Sir Dalby Thomas, John Kabes tended to incline more to the Dutch side. When the sixty-five-year-old Sir Dalby arrived on the Gold Coast in 1703 as the Agent-General of the Royal African Company, he at first endeavoured to win the goodwill and respect of the kings and prin-

[1] T70/374, Cape Coast Castle Journal, 12 May 1697.

[2] Bosman, op. cit., letter iii, p. 27.

[3] T70/5/7, Abstracts of Letters from Cape Coast, 1 Jan. 1706; W.I.C. 917, Report of P. Nuyts and Council, 1706.

[4] W.I.C. 917, W. de la Palma and Council to the X, June 1702.

cipal traders. Sir Dalby was not long in seeing in Kabes an ideal ally for the promotion of English interests. A year after his arrival he wrote glowingly about Kabes. He found this 'great trader's' support for the English so unflinching that he requested a present of 'a fine laced hat with a blue feather, three yards of fine scarlet cloth and a silver headed cane' to be given to Kabes. These he considered necessary because 'the Kings of these places love and fear him . . . He makes them at any time do as he please. . . .'[1] In addition to the presents, John Kabes was also credited with trade goods at reduced prices. The Agent-General even built him a house near Cape Coast Castle. When in the same year the Dutch were said to have planned to kill Kabes, Sir Dalby tipped him off and assured him of his willingness to assist him not only with 'powder and ball but also with men and muskets'. He did not consider any help to Kabes to be any bother, since he had 'borne all your Highness' temptations'. The Directors in London readily approved of any help and presents that would be necessary to retain Kabes in their service. Yet by September 1704 relations between Kabes and Sir Dalby had become so strained that at the command of the latter British warships 'demolished the houses of Jan Kabes'.

The reason for the estrangement must be sought in two main factors, namely Kabes's propensity towards asserting his independence and, more importantly, Sir Dalby Thomas's aversion to overmighty friends and servants. Kabes, although a faithful friend of the English, was never prepared to trade with them only. A shrewd trader, he was prepared, and he considered it quite legitimate, to do business with all who would give him advantageous terms. On the Gold Coast the most profitable trade was with the interlopers, and this undermined the established companies. Little wonder then that Sir Dalby fell out with Kabes, who had hitherto been considered a reliable and faithful ally. Sir Dalby reported that the activities of interlopers had 'made John Cabes and the Anomabos so impudent as they have been to endeavour to take your Hons Forts and Catles'.[2] John Kabes, a private and prosperous trader long before the arrival of Sir Dalby Thomas, and not an appointee of the London Directors, could not understand why he should be expected to lose trade merely because he happened to be of service to the English company.

There was yet another reason for the dispute between Kabes and

[1] T70/5, Abstract of Letter from Cape Coast to R.A.C., 23 Mar. 1704.
[2] T70/5, From Cape Coast Castle to R.A.C., 22 Apr. 1705.

Sir Dalby. This was John Kabes's unwillingness promptly to repay moneys advanced to him. Like the king of Eguafo, Kabes was refusing invitations to Cape Coast Castle because he was heavily in the company's debt. The Directors warned Sir Dalby not to give large credits, since the existence of large debts almost invariably created troubles for the company and the debtors. Not infrequently it led to the loss of both money and friends. It was therefore recommended that any inducements to persuade traders to transact business with the English should be in the form of presents, not of credit. However, when it was considered necessary to advance anything on credit, the Directors asked that pawns should first be secured.

Without doubt it was Kabes's tardiness in settling his debts that led Sir Dalby to refer to him as 'a villainous servant of the company'. It is debatable whether Kabes deliberately refused to honour his obligations to the English. Whatever the reason for the delay, Kabes paid £224 to the company in November 1705.[1]

When Kabes's relations with the English were strained, he naturally went to Elmina and held a meeting with the Dutch General. But instead of taking advantage of the opportunity to secure the man they had so long been enticing, the Dutch by sheer miscalculation let the chance slip. Pieter Nuyts, the Director-General, mistakenly believed that if he pretended to be uninterested in Kabes the latter would approach as a suppliant rather than as an independent person. The Dutch therefore 'adopted an attitude of reserve as though . . . not concerned about his person in order thus to make him more uneasy'.[2] With such an attitude it was not surprising that Kabes was once more driven into the hands of the English.

Kabes's quarrel with the English told heavily on their trade. The Directors in London wrote to remind Sir Dalby Thomas of the fall in the gold trade. Sir Dalby realized that there was need of a much more tactful person to help compose the differences between Kabes and the English. He realized that without Kabes's goodwill there was no likelihood of profitable trade. By reappointing William Hicks, who had some years previously been a popular factor at Komenda, to take charge of the Komenda fort, relations were soon normalized. Hicks's popularity stemmed from the fact that he tried to understand the Africans with whom he had to deal. Sir Dalby's

[1] T70/5, Cape Coast Castle Account Book, 25 Nov. 1705.
[2] N.B.K.G. 59/31, P. Nuyts and Council to the X, 14 Apr. 1706.

confidence in Hicks was not misplaced. A few days after his arrival at Komenda he was able to get Kabes, who had not been in the English fort for eighteen months, to pay him a visit. Kabes promised to help revive the trade.[1] The *rapprochement* so delighted Sir Dalby Thomas that he immediately ordered that a dinner should be given to Kabes, at which the latter was treated with the greatest honour and respect. He was welcomed at the gates of the fort by a volley of cannon shots, and presents were showered on him. With the disagreement amicably composed, Sir Dalby became optimistic about English trade. John Kabes, too, left the English in no doubt of his sincerity. Sir Dalby therefore elatedly reported to his superiors in London that, now that 'a perfect peace had been made with John Kabes', the Directors should not be concerned 'with the wars in Africa', because the 'remaining chiefs were inconsiderable'.[2]

To assure the English of his determination to facilitate trade, Kabes immediately started to build a large town around the English fort. Such a town would provide accommodation not only for the servants of Kabes, but also for the many inland traders who were coming to Komenda in large numbers. More evidence of Kabes's devotion to the English was manifested from this time. In June 1706 he negotiated with Hicks, on behalf of the English, to get free passage for inland traders through Asebu. In the same year the Dutch factor at Sekondi, Lieftinck, notified Elmina that 'Kabes intended to go to Asante to solicit trade from the great Prince Zaay' for the English company. Although Kabes himself did not go to Asante, he may well have played a prominent part in making it possible for an English delegation that visited Asante in July 1706. English dependence on Kabes for whatever they planned to do at Komenda increased in course of time. By acquiring more wealth, Kabes increased his influence tremendously not only over his own men but also over those who had been employed by the European companies. The English openly confessed that even their own slaves could not say anything 'but what was pleasing to John Kabes'.[3] Even African traders in nearby towns tended to look to Kabes for better European goods. He sought to embarrass the Dutch even beyond the borders of his own state. In his desire to promote the interests of the English, he assured the traders at Takoradi, which was under the Dutch

[1] T70/5/23, From W. Hicks to Sir Dalby Thomas, 28 Mar. 1706.
[2] T70/5/25, 28 Mar., 4 Apr., 10 May 1706.
[3] T70/1464, Komenda Diary, 20 Nov. 1715.

between 1710 and 1720, that he would help them to obtain better goods from the English. Thus in 1715 the traders at Takoradi were rejecting Dutch guns because they were receiving better English firelocks and gunpowder from John Kabes.[1]

His readiness to help the English did not mean that Kabes considered himself to be irrevocably bound to the English interest. He was not prepared to lose his independence of action, and traded with anybody, not excluding interlopers, who could satisfy his needs. It was unfortunate that the English misunderstood Kabes's real intentions towards them. It is difficult to understand how they could expect a man on whom they depended for their very stay at Komenda and other places to take orders from them. Admittedly they were paying him about one ounce of gold every month, but there can be no doubt that by 1700 Kabes could easily have dispensed with this. Indeed the English should have felt that their payment was nothing but a token of friendship. Certainly by 1711 Kabes was working for the English not because of any money he received, but because of the benefits derived from an alliance with the English. From that year he continued to be serviceable, 'though he received no pay'.[2] That such a man would devote himself to his private business whenever necessary should surprise nobody.

A shrewd and calculating businessman, John Kabes invested in many profitable fields. He made large profits from his maize farms. Maize cultivation was economically profitable, for the demand was great. Both Africans and Europeans needed maize. Apart from being needed for baking maize bread, it was needed in the Middle Passage to feed the slaves. Certainly it was in the interest of the companies to induce their factors and servants on the coast to take the local foodstuffs available. It reduced their expenditure on food. By about 1710 the English had come to relish food made of corn so much that home-made bread from Europe was becoming redundant. Thus in 1712 the Royal African Company was advised to stop sending bread, because 'the company's servants liked better this country's bread made of Indian Corn'.[3]

People who cultivated maize therefore had a profitable trade. There were times when inland people even came to the coastal states in search of corn. The Europeans were left in short supply of that

[1] N.B.K.G. 82, From Landman to Elmina, 25 June 1715.
[2] T70/5/80, From Cape Coast Castle to R.A.C., 4 July 1711.
[3] T70/26, Grosvenor and Council to R.A.C., 4 May 1712.

foodstuff in 1680, when 'the upland blacks came down to clear the corn of the waterside people'.[1] Wealthy local merchants employed labourers to cultivate their farms for them. Men like John Claessen, John Kabes, and John Konny supplemented what they obtained from trading with the yield from their farms. During the sowing and harvesting seasons they even neglected trade for agriculture. Kabes also purchased maize cheaply from African cultivators and sold it at high profits to European ships. At times the companies advanced goods to the Africans against what maize they would harvest. But since the prices fluctuated in accordance with local demand, the Africans preferred to pay back whatever they owed in other commodities rather than in corn, so as to be at liberty to sell their harvests at profitable prices. Kabes was frequently doing this to the English. This was a practice which was very much resented, and which not unnaturally led to misunderstandings on both sides. In 1715 and 1716 Kabes is known to have disappointed his English friends by sending his corn by canoe to be sold at Accra, where a poor harvest had sent up prices; and he also sold corn to interlopers.[2]

In addition to farming and trading, Kabes engaged in the salt industry. By the turn of the seventeenth century salt was in great demand by the inland traders. Although the Europeans attempted to oust the Africans from the trade, they were never successful. It is true that they employed their ships to carry salt from Accra to Komenda and Cape Coast to be sold to the Asante traders, but they were never able to push Kabes out of this trade.[3] He even carried on trade in salt right under the noses of the European companies. His servants took his salt to traders around the Dutch fort at Komenda in 1715. When the Dutch seized his baskets of salt, he went to Elmina and demanded restitution. The factor at Komenda was promptly ordered to return the salt to Kabes.[4]

His numerous occupations included keeping a flotilla of canoes, which he hired out to the Europeans. He contracted to supply the companies with canoes and canoemen for carrying their goods from fort to fort. The English fort at Komenda was so dependent on Kabes for canoes that at times it lay at his mercy.[5] When it was being

[1] T70/1/55, N. Bradley to R.A.C., 3 May 1680.
[2] T70/1464/17, Komenda Diary, 5 Mar. 1715, 9 Jan. 1716.
[3] T70/1464, Komenda Diary, 11 Feb., 8 May 1715.
[4] N.B.K.G. 82, Heyman's Letter to Elmina, 12 Jan. 1715.
[5] T70/1464, Komenda Diary, 26 Apr. 1715. The English contracted with Kabes, who provided them with 3 canoemen 'at two ackeys each per month'.

rumoured that the Fante had been hired by the Dutch to attack Komenda, the English contacted Kabes and requested him to make canoes available for the collection of shells at Takoradi. (The shells were to be burnt for lime to repair the Komenda fort.) At first Kabes dismissed the rumour as proceeding only from the timorous temper of the white men! When the English insisted he made it plain that he would not perform the work *ex gratia*, but would demand 'full payment for the cost of the canoe hire'.[1] The English factor, Baillie, a haughty young man who was obsessed with his post, was exasperated with Kabes's demand and tactlessly set out to offend him. Embittered by what he described as Kabes's continued roguery and averseness to serve the company, he demanded to know whether such a man 'deserves pay under them'.[2] It is clear that Baillie misunderstood the real basis of Kabes's association with the English.

It is true that to men like Baillie, who blindly sought to further the trading interests of their employers, the behaviour of such prosperous African traders left much to be desired. But what Kabes refused to do commercially for the English was amply compensated for in other fields. Political instability in the Komenda state had reduced the rulers to mere puppets in the hands of the rival European companies. John Kabes remained the single exception. From 1695, when he invited the English in, till his death he was the only stabilizing force in Komenda. His varied interests and his wealth made him virtually independent of both Europeans and Africans. Whatever his early status, in his relations with the Europeans he had become an over-mighty ally by about 1710. During the period of strained relationship with Abe (Tagee) Tekyi Kuma, an English nominee to the Komenda stool, it was through Kabes that the English attempted to win him back to their side. Even as far back as 1704 John Kabes, together with one Brown, had succeeded in dissuading the king of Komenda from ceding a hillock on the beach to the Dutch. On the death of the king of Komenda in 1704, Kabes helped the English to enstool one Tekyi Adico. The puppet ruler was made to promise that whenever the English did not have much trade they would be exempted from payment of ground rent for their fort.[3] Further evidence of Kabes's useful services to the English was seen during the Anglo-Dutch attack on John Konny of Ahanta in 1711,

[1] T70/1464, 23 July 1715. [2] T70/1464, 8 May, 23 July 1715.
[3] T70/1184, Miscellaneous Entries, 1 Jan. 1704; T70/1463, Cape Coast Journal, 26 Feb. 1703; idem, 21 Aug. 1704.

when, because of his devotion to the English, Kabes joined forces with them. Kabes's troops were reported to have been feared by Konny's men. By 1715 the Dutch had given up all hopes of ever attracting Kabes into their service. And yet they realized that their interests would be better served if they remained alive to the movements of Kabes. They therefore attempted to work through some of his friends. At a meeting between Kabes and the king of Twifo in 1715, one Amma, a friend of Kabes, was employed by the Dutch to keep them informed of the proceedings. Kabes could at times use his influence to help the English in places outside Komenda. When in 1713 the Anomabo people seized the crew of a Ten Per Cent ship, and held them to ransom for one of their men who had been enticed and stolen by one Captain Homlin, it was John Kabes who intervened on behalf of the English to get them released.[1]

Sir Dalby Thomas considered Kabes's advice so valuable that in purely customary matters he made it a point to consult him. It was upon the advice of John Kabes and the king of Asebu that Sir Dalby Thomas enstooled Aguaba Brafo as the queen of Fetu. Although the immediate effect of the action was war, it eventually enabled the English to establish effective control over Fetu during Sir Dalby Thomas's time.[2] Whenever there were disputes along the trade routes leading to Komenda and Cape Coast, Kabes took a prominent role in the negotiations to get the chiefs concerned to allow free passage of traders. In 1711 there arose a dispute between Abrembo (Abrem), Eguafo, and Twifo which was damaging to English interests. Kabes successfully undertook to compose the differences. The English conceded that it was John Kabes who had been 'serviceable in bringing this about'.[3]

It must be admitted, none the less, that John Kabes at times engaged in quarrels which greatly disrupted normal trade. His disagreements with Twifo between 1715 and 1716 did a lot of damage to trade. When he felt that he had been wronged, he did not hesitate to resort to measures which suited him, irrespective of their effects on others. In the war between Akyem and Twifo in 1714 some women, children, and property were sent to Komenda for safety. A boy from Twifo, who was given to Apea, a cousin of Kabes, quickly

[1] N.B.K.G. 82, From H. Harring to Heyman, 12 Oct. 1715; T70/1463, 25 Feb. 1703.

[2] T70/1463, 12 and 17 Apr. 1704; T70/5/37, Cape Coast Journal, Aug. 1707.

[3] T70/5/80, Seth Grosvenor and James Phipps to R.A.C., 16 Sept. 1711.

changed hands until at last he was pawned to a trader at Cape Coast. When the war ended Kabes was asked to investigate the matter. The negotiations broke down because Kabes was accused of disrespectful behaviour to the Twifo. The enraged Twifo ambushed and seized some men from Komenda. Kabes got ready to retaliate, and in the attacks and counter-attacks trade came to a complete standstill. The Asante and other traders refused to risk their lives and goods on the unsafe routes.[1] The English persuaded Kabes to submit the matter to independent arbitration. One Antibene (? Antwi Bene), an Asante trader resident at Komenda, was chosen to settle the dispute. He spent about a fortnight in Twifo, and returned with the assurance that everything had been composed, and that the Twifo had been pacified with a live sheep and 8 bendas of gold (£64).[2] Judging by the seriousness of the situation and the trouble the Twifo had gone to in seeking redress from Kabes, the terms of Antibene's agreement appeared too easy to be true. Observers became sceptical about the agreement. The scepticism was justified by subsequent events.

The disagreement between Kabes and Twifo had repercussions as far as Kumasi, the Asante capital. The Asantehene therefore had to step in to settle the affair. A reconciliatory delegation from the king of Asante was dispatched to Twifo and Komenda to help compose the differences. In order to show the king's impartiality on the issue, the king is said to have returned a curious gift of 'a sheep with four horns' sent by Kabes. He, however, indicated his willingness to accept such a gift after the dispute had been settled. The king urged on Twifo that 'if it is their fault that the palaver [be] not made up, he would oblige them to accept any terms'.[3] Thanks to the mediation of the Asantehene, the two sides agreed on a settlement. In appreciation of the king's efforts, a quarter of the £32 which Kabes paid to Twifo was sent to the king for his trouble. Although the bad blood between Twifo and Komenda was not completely removed, the way was paved for the resumption of trade.

From the beginning of the eighteenth century both European and African traders sought the friendship of the Asante king. Kabes

[1] T70/1464, Komenda Diary, 10 and 13 Nov. 1714; T70/1464, Komenda Diary, 20 Nov. 1714.

[2] Dutch version of the cause of the incident is different. It was alleged that John Kabes caused the murder of the nephew of Acafo, king of Twifo. N.B.K.G. 82, From Heyman to Elmina, 16 Jan. 1715.

[3] T70/1464, Komenda Diary, 23 Nov. 1714, 29 Mar. 1715.

often boasted of his friendship and influence with the king. At the same time, however, when his interests were affected, he was ready to disregard and to incur the displeasure of the Asante. It demanded a bold and powerful man to challenge the Asantehene. That Kabes could stand on his rights in complete disregard of what the Asante would do was a reflection on his role as an indispensable broker. It was not unknown for Kabes to sell large quantities of guns and gunpowder to the Asante. It was on account of the favourable position he enjoyed that he seized a string of precious beads which the Dutch had intended as a present to the king of Asante. For two years Kabes refused to surrender it. To force Kabes to give it up the Asante traders were asked not to trade at Komenda. In 1715, however, the beads were surrendered, and the Asante were allowed to trade at Komenda.[1]

It appears that the interdict which Asantehene placed on trade at Komenda was not strictly observed by the Asante. Traders continued to come to Komenda. If anything the evidence suggests that, as far as the Europeans were concerned, Kabes was the only person at Komenda whose power and influence were accepted by the inland traders who came to Komenda. An incident which occurred in 1715 may be cited as an example. In January 1715 Richardson, an English factor at Komenda, *panyarred* goods which some Asante traders had bought from the Dutch. The Asante unsuccessfully attempted to blow up the gates of the English fort with gunpowder in an effort to retrieve their goods. At last they left Komenda in disgust. Apprehensive of the effect which such an incident was likely to have on Asante–English relations, efforts were made to send the goods after the traders. Such a mission demanded tact and a knack for persuasion. Both qualities were possessed by Kabes, who willingly and successfully undertook the mission.[2] That the Asante traders were willing to do everything for Kabes is also seen from the help they gave him in his dispute with Acafo of Twifo. At a time when the quarrel was likely to erupt into an open conflict, the Asante traders bought guns from the forts for John Kabes. Thus, whatever Kabes's influence at Kumasi, at Komenda he was accepted as one whose displeasure should be avoided.

The agent Baillie appears to have read too much into the return of Kabes's sheep by the Asantehene. He cited it and the fact that some

[1] N.B.K.G. 82, From Landman to Elmina, 22 June 1715.
[2] Ibid., 17 Jan. 1715; T70/1464, Komenda Diary, 10 Jan. 1715.

Asante traders bypassed Kabes in his efforts to divert trade to the English fort as an indication of his lack of influence. Perhaps Kabes's influence was declining. Nevertheless, Baillie underestimated the important factor which bound the inland traders and the prosperous coastal middlemen—the coastmen's advice on standard prices and their hospitality to those who travelled from far-off places. It is a fact that some of the Asante traders complained about Kabes's methods of trade. It was not unknown for Kabes to buy slaves and ivory cheaply from the Asante and to make profits of more than 50 per cent by selling them to the Europeans.[1] Despite the profits he made on the transactions, Kabes was found to sell at cheaper rates than the established companies. This was because goods which he obtained from interlopers were mostly better and cheaper than those sold by the companies.

Kabes's association with the Europeans, especially his long friendship with the English, has received many different comments. For over a quarter of a century when he worked for, and in the interest of, the English it appears that he is best remembered for the unfriendly comments he drew from Baillie, who failed to see Kabes in a better light than an ordinary servant. This is the more surprising, since Kabes's fortune and influence were well established before the English secured a foothold in Komenda. Eight years previous to the appointment of Baillie, Kabes had already built himself a large and strong house on which he had mounted more than twenty-four guns. Yet by 1715 Baillie was recommending a review of the ounce of gold which the English, in theory, were paying to Kabes. Judging from his diversified occupations and his varied sources of income it is difficult to imagine that the withdrawal or reduction of the amount would have had much effect on Kabes. Even granting that the reduction would have told on Kabes, the exercise would have been ineffective, since it would only have succeeded in driving him into the arms of the Dutch. The lack of restraint which characterized some of the European observers, in using words like 'rogue' and 'villain', has tended to submerge Kabes's finest and most interesting qualities. One historian, obviously following the footsteps of Baillie and his friends, refers to him as the 'notorious John Kabes'.[2] Nor is the picture painted differently by subsequent historians. Disregarding his earlier services, Kabes is described as a man 'who for twenty

[1] T70/1464, Komenda Diary, 23 Nov. 1714.
[2] Claridge, op. cit. i. 164.

years or more . . . served one side or the other and quarelled with both'.[1] The impression created is one of unprofitable association. That Kabes associated with both the Dutch and the English at different times is a fact. It is also true that he quarrelled with the Dutch. But there is no justification for the assertion that Kabes ended up by quarrelling with the English. Except for the brief period of eighteen months when he boycotted the English fort at Komenda, the indications are that John Kabes remained a faithful servant of the English. True, he refused to be dictated to as regards how and when to dispose of his commodities. It is also a fact that he refused to give out his canoes to the English without first demanding payment for such services. Occasionally Kabes even threatened to 'remove into the bush'.[2] It is not without significance that all these incidents occurred between 1714 and 1716, when the tactless Baillie was posted to Komenda. The very fact that John Kabes was buried in the English fort at Komenda, and the shock and indignant surprise shown in London over the robbery of his grave by some English servants on the coast, stand as a living testimonial to his faithfulness and the esteem and appreciation in which his services to the Royal African Company were held. When the news of the robbery reached London, the Directors immediately wrote to Cape Coast that they were 'much concerned that any of our servants could be guilty of so base and inhuman an action as that of digging up and robbing the grave of John Kabes who was buried in our fort of Komenda'.[3] It is reasonable to suppose that the indignant shock was partly due to the disrespect shown to the resting-place of a man whose power and influence had been placed at the service of the English. It might also have been partly due to the unfavourable impression which the action was likely to create on the Africans.

A contemporary of John Kabes who was economically, socially, and politically as powerful was John Konny (Counie, Kony) of Pokoso, in Ahanta. A man of strong personality and character, he ignored Dutch threats, openly defied them, and successfully pitted his power against an Anglo-Dutch alliance in 1711. For almost fifteen years he baffled the calculations of the Dutch and thwarted their designs. John Konny was a ruler with connections reaching as far inland as Asante. His attempts to inject life into the Brandenburg

[1] Davies, op. cit., p. 281.
[2] T70/1464, Komenda Diary, 12 Aug., 12 Sept. 1715.
[3] T70/50, R.A.C. to Cape Coast Castle, 12 Dec. 1734.

African Company won him an enthusiastic acclaim in Germany. For his efforts, he won for himself the appellation 'the last Prussian Negro Prince'.[1] He faithfully supported a flag the limits of whose power he could neither know nor visualize. His stout defence of the former Brandenburg possessions resulted in their headquarters at Pokoso being for long known as 'Connie's Castle',[2] even after he had been driven away by the Dutch.

As with most of the African traders of his time, nothing is known about Konny's early life and career. His name came up during a period of crisis and remained as long as it lasted. When the English surgeon John Atkins visited him in 1721, he described Konny as 'a strong made man of about fifty'.[3] Konny may have seen everything about the Brandenburg activities on the Gold Coast from the beginning to the end. He appears to have been born some time around the later 1660s and early 1670s. He was thus probably in his teens, an impressionable age, when the Brandenburgers made their debut, and was in his early twenties when their main fort, the Great Fredricksburg Castle, was started in 1695.[4] It may be surmised that Konny helped in one way or another in building the castle which he later came to command. Beyond whatever apprenticeship or trade he may have learnt from the Brandenburgers, there is no indication that he ever had a formal education. He was known 'to understand English enough to swear in it', but that was about all. Later on he depended on the mulatto Bosman for reading and answering his correspondence. Against his name appended to an agreement with the Dutch in 1722 is written 'His Mark',[5] a strong indication that the art of writing ever remained a mystery to him.

From 1711 on Konny's name begins to feature prominently in the European records. In that year he led a successful revolt in Great Fredricksburg which deposed General de Lange in favour of Stockhoff as head of the Brandenburg company in Africa. An Anglo-Dutch delegation sent to settle the dispute was unsuccessful. Konny was reported to have accused the general of arbitrariness.[6]

[1] Welman, *Native States of the Gold Coast; Ahanta*, p. 34.

[2] W. Smith, 'A Voyage to Guinea in 1726', in Astley, *Collections* ii. 477.

[3] J. Atkins, in ibid. 449.

[4] Lawrence, *Trade, Castles and Forts*, p. 225. This is an up-to-date book on the forts and castles of the various trading nations which came to West Africa.

[5] W.I.C. 122/85, Agreement between John Konny and the Dutch, 22 Nov. 1722.

[6] W.I.C. 124, Report of Seth Grosvenor and W. Butler, 3 Jan. 1711.

All protests of the Dutch and the English, and their attempts to get de Lange reinstated, went unheeded by Konny. The reason why the two companies were anxious to prevent Konny from gaining control over the three Brandenburg possessions, Pokoso, Takrama, and Akoda, was the position of vantage in which they were placed. They were the termini of the western trade route through Asante and Aowin. In the second decade of the eighteenth century the inland traders were beginning to use this route more than eastern routes. The possessions were therefore favourably placed to tap the gold from Asante and Aowin. The Brandenburg company was left in short supply of trade goods. This may be accounted for by the progressive decline of the company's fortunes which resulted from Prussia's commitments in the war of the Spanish Succession in Europe. On account of the war the company was forced to depend on interlopers for its trade goods.

The English and the Dutch resented the Brandenburg dependence on interlopers. Each company desired to get control over the forts in order to forestall any action likely to be taken by its rival. As far back as 1706 Sir Dalby Thomas had suggested that the English should control Cape Three Points in order to preserve English trade on the windward coast. He expressed the fear that unless that was done the place would be lost to the Dutch.[1] His appeals went unheeded. Gradually the whole place came under the control of John Konny, whose policy of giving encouragement to interlopers adversely affected trade at the English fort at Dixcove. Both the Dutch and the English patiently awaited an opportunity to move in against Konny. It was in mid-1711 that what seemed an opportunity to humble Konny offered itself to the rival companies.

The Dutch and the English exploited a quarrel which had broken out between Konny and a rival caboceer at Axim, one Appre. The disagreement was over one Adjoba, whom Appre claimed to be his slave and whom Konny claimed as his blood relation. Konny, with whom she had taken refuge, disregarded all demands made by Appre to get her sent back to him.[2] With a promise of help from the Dutch, Appre collected a force to attack Konny. The venture ended in a disastrous failure. John Konny then took the offensive

[1] T70/5/28, Sir Dalby Thomas to R.A.C., 16 June 1706.

[2] W.I.C. 124/5, From Butler at Axim to Elmina, 28 July 1711; W.I.C. 124/5, Reply of Agent Stockhoff to Director-General Harring, 21 Oct. 1711; Welman, op. cit., p. 35.

against Appre. He overran Dixcove, where the people had lent help to Appre. His successes alarmed the Dutch and the English, who further feared that the whole of Ahanta would come under Konny's control. The Dutch hurriedly convened a meeting at which it was unanimously agreed that prompt and decisive measures should be taken. In the face of danger they were ready to sink their differences with the English, whom they approached for a joint attack on Konny.[1] In September 1711 an Anglo-Dutch convention was entered into 'to raise an army . . . to repel the insolences of the said Negro . . . and to reduce Konny to a temper and a desire of peace'.[2]

African and European soldiers from virtually all the Dutch and English forts on the Gold Coast were drawn into the struggle. John Kabes of Komenda was said to have marched his own forces to Elmina to help fight the 'Brandenburg Caboceer'. The allied forces caught up with Konny at Akoda. Messengers sent to Konny to dissuade him from his determination to fight were contemptuously treated. Three were returned with their hands tied up behind their backs, whilst the fourth man was held prisoner. In the ensuing battle the allies suffered a resounding defeat and beat a retreat to Dixcove. The reasons for their defeat are not difficult to establish. In their haste to reduce Konny to size, they appear to have underrated his strength. Their ill-disciplined forces could not stand the 900 well-armed and better-drilled soldiers of Konny. And yet, instead of taking account of this, they blamed their defeat on their African soldiers, and especially on Kabes, at whose instigation the soldiers were said to have 'suddenly and precipitately left'.[3] The allied forces only gain was the capture of 'two whites an an Indian', the sole inmates of Fort Dorethea at Akoda.

The Konny war, which began in August, went on spasmodically for nearly six and a half months. Its ramifications were wide. Many states were drawn into the struggle. John Konny was helped by soldiers from Wassa and Asante under Buo Kofi and Nyakoba respectively. Apart from the help of their own soldiers, the Europeans freely

[1] W.I.C. 124, Resolution of Director-General and Council, 11 Aug. 1711.

[2] W.I.C. 124, Accounts of Events at Akoda, 23 Oct. 1711; T70/50/80, Report of Grosvenor, 14 Oct. 1711; T70/1184, Protest of the English to Nicolas du Bois, 25 Oct. 1716; W.I.C. 124, Agreement between James Phipps and H. Harring, 20 Sept., 6 Oct. 1711.

[3] W.I.C. 124/17, Report of H. Harring and Council, 23 Sept. 1711; T70/5/16, Account of the Ten Percent man, John Green, Sept. 1711; T70/5/81, Grosvenor and Phipps to R.A.C., 25 Mar. 1712.

distributed presents and bribes to the various states in attempts to gain their help or neutrality in the struggle. They were therefore able to win the support of such states as Akyem, Abrem, Adom, Twifo, and Ankobra, to mention but a few. The war proved a costly venture for the allies. The Dutch alone were known to have spent over £2,000, while the English admitted that it had been 'fought at a great expense and a considerable loss'.[1]

It was in the heat of the struggle that Nicolas du Bois, the newly appointed provisional Director of the Brandenburg African Company, arrived on the coast. The first thing he did was to conclude a defence agreement with Konny and the king and elders of Ahanta. Among other things, the signatories of the agreement promised to provide labour and materials to repair Great Fredricksburg Castle. The General, on his part, promised to provide powder and muskets 'in the event of a hostile invasion of their lands'.[2] With this done du Bois was encouraged to pursue other measures that later landed him in trouble with Konny. He made the mistake of thinking that his successful agreement with Konny meant that the latter would accept his leadership and initiative at all times. It is likely that it was on the strength of this agreement that, later in 1712, du Bois concluded an agreement with the Dutch and the English. The merit of the agreement was the fact that it terminated the long-drawn-out and costly struggle with John Konny. But, judging from the terms of the agreement, it is difficult to avoid the inference that du Bois took too much for granted. John Konny, whom he was supposedly representing, does not seem to have been taken into his confidence during the negotiations. Little wonder then that he did not feel bound to accept the terms. If anything, Konny honoured them more in their non-observance.

It is difficult to see how the victorious Konny could be forced to pay anything to the English and the Dutch. But this was exactly what the agreement sought to ensure. After promising to live in peace with the English and the Dutch, du Bois agreed to make Konny and his allies pay £640 to the English and the Dutch 'under the name of purchasing peace'. John Konny was to return the English slaves he had captured at Dixcove. In return the Dutch and the English

[1] T70/5/81, Grosvenor and Phipps to R.A.C., 15 Mar. 1712; W.I.C. 124, Expenses in the war against John Konny, 17 Aug. 1711 to 28 Feb. 1712.

[2] Welman, op. cit., p. 40; Lawrence, op. cit., p. 233; W.I.C. 124, Agreement between J. Konny and others . . . with N. du Bois, 3 Mar. 1712.

were to restrain their servants from attacking the Ahanta. The three contracting companies were to concert their efforts in forcing Konny to abide by the terms. Strangely enough, the dispute between Konny and Appre, which had brought about the war, was left to the elders of Axim and Pokoso to settle in accordance with 'the country's custom'.[1] One thing stands out clearly about this agreement. The companies proved that their main interest was what concerned their trade, and not what concerned the Africans who lived near them.

Despite the obvious flaw in the terms which presumed that Konny could be constrained to abide by such an unfavourable agreement, the joint action of the three European companies, especially the alliance of the English and the Dutch, was of great significance. In the first place it was an open admission of the strength and importance that the European traders attached to John Konny. They were prepared to forget their persistent rivalry to see to it that he did not extend his strength to their disadvantage. The new-found unity of the Europeans left a strong impression on the Africans. That the two trading companies which had keenly competed, secretly undersold and undermined each other, and openly attacked and captured each others' ships and forts at one time or another, could bury their differences and come together against an African merchant naturally surprised the people on whose soil and, in most cases, by whose help the Europeans had carried on their designs. The action had no precedents on the Gold Coast, for the 'Negroes had never seen the like of it before'.[2] Not long afterwards, mutual suspicions plagued the Anglo-Dutch alliance. Each suspected the other of scheming to obtain the Brandenburg possessions from Konny. Things soon fell apart. The agreement became a dead letter, for neither the Dutch nor the English were paid anything by Konny.

The successful stand which Konny took against the Europeans enhanced his reputation and strengthened his forces. His power and fame spread far and wide. He became the effective ruler of Ahanta in all but name. He commanded by far and away the largest force of any single power on the coast. Thus his capacity to disrupt trade in and around his state was beyond dispute. It was therefore in the interest of the European companies to try and avert any confrontation

[1] T70/1184/63, W.I.C. 124, Agreement between the Dutch, English, and Brandenburg, 5–20 Oct. 1712.

[2] T70/5/80, Grosvenor to R.A.C., 14 Oct. 1711.

with Konny. In their desire to do this they were prepared to mediate in cases involving Konny and others. An incident in 1714 may be taken as an instance. In that year a struggle between two rival factions in Boutri, the Red and White Earth Companies, resulted in the death of Oben, a friend and an ally of Konny. The latter immediately took up arms in revenge, but the Dutch quickly and effectively moved in to nip things in the bud. The leaders of the Red Earth group (the Adjaase) were arrested by the Dutch, and forced to compensate the family of the deceased. They went further. All debts which Oben owed to the Dutch were written off. Finally the Dutch succeeded in obtaining an amicable settlement between Konny and the Adjaase.[1]

Whilst the Dutch showed their anxiety to settle the dispute over Oben's death, their handling of affairs in Axim was anything but tactful. Perhaps they expected Konny to be better disposed towards them, and thought that he had willingly agreed to pay the compensation which the 1712 agreement had imposed on him. If so, they merely deluded themselves. As with all the incidents in which Konny found himself at variance with the Europeans, the original disputants were Africans. Early in 1715 two personal attendants of Konny, Bosom and Kra, made their escape to Pinga, a caboceer from Ankobra district, near Axim. Pinga was sure that Konny would soon send soldiers after the men. To divert any attack from himself the fugitives were handed over to the Dutch Governor of Fort St. Anthony at Axim. The Governor welcomed them, and considered it a favourable opportunity to force Konny to pay what he owed to the Dutch. The payment of the sum involved in the 1712 agreement with du Bois was made the condition upon which Konny's men would be surrendered. Konny demanded that the men should be handed over to him. He even threatened to besiege the fort. He backed up his demands by seizing eight men from Elmina. When the Dutch refused to hand over the men to him he resorted to a much more effective measure which affected the whole of Axim. At first he engaged in a war of nerves in which he daily paraded his soldiers under bright arms to impress his fighting strength on Axim. In addition he staked about £1,600 on the heads of Pinga and the Governor of the fort. At the same time his allies from Wassa sealed off the northern approaches to Axim, thus making it impossible for foodstuffs to be sent to that town. All attempts by the elders of Axim to get the

[1] W.I.C. 124, From Boutri to Elmina, 15 Sept. 1716, Aug. 1717.

Governor to release the man went unheeded.[1] The young men of Axim rebelled against their elders, and made it quite plain that they would have nothing to do with any war with Konny.

Internal disputes in Konny's camp appear to have made the Dutch adamant in the face of the entreaties of the Axim people. In October 1715 a disagreement broke out between Konny and his Wassa allies over an amount of money to be paid to Buo Kofi, the Wassa leader. John Konny was even said to have provoked the Wassa into open war by imprisoning their leader and a few of their principal men. But before matters could come to a head an important development in the north-western district of Axim had diverted the attention of the Wassa elsewhere. This was the Asante war against Doma in 1714, in which some Asante soldiers had escaped with their booty to Aowin. The Asantehene therefore dispatched a force under the great Asante general, Amankwa Tia, against Aowin. The Wassa soldiers who had been helping Konny were needed to take part in the war. Thus Ntwan, the king of Wassa, could not make war with Konny over the imprisonment of Buo Kofi. By the close of the Aowin war, however, Konny had released the prisoners, thus removing any cause for an attack on him.[2] This was a disappointment to the Dutch, who had hoped that they could exploit Konny's disagreement with Wassa to their own advantage.

Dutch hopes of an attack on Konny were strengthened when a group of Asante soldiers arrived in Abokro, a few miles west of Axim. It was rumoured that the Asante had come to help the Wassa fight Konny, who was accused of hiring some Twifo to attack Wassa when the latter's armies were engaged in Aowin. The rumours appear to have been substantiated by the fact that a group of Asante and Wassa soldiers arrived in Pokoso in December 1715. Their mission was said to have been to demand an explanation from Konny in regard to his part in the Twifo attacks on Wassa. Whatever the truth in the accusation against Konny, he soon extricated himself from the embarrassing situation in which he found himself. Not only did he convince the Asante of his innocence, but he managed to impress upon the king of Asante that his friendship and regard for that nation were beyond dispute. Konny dispatched a mission

[1] N.B.K.G. 82, Van Naarsen's Reports from Axim to Elmina, 19, 22 Jan., 6 and 13 Feb., 5 and 25 June, 12 Sept. 1715.

[2] N.B.K.G. 82, Van Naarsen's Report, 11 Oct. 1715; N.B.K.G. 82/21, Report from Axim to Elmina, 31 Dec. 1715.

with costly presents to Kumasi to explain matters to the Asantehene.[1]

Konny's resourcefulness was better proved during the arrival of the Wassa and Asante armies in his country. He succeeded in getting his views accepted by the Asante, who used their influence to settle the differences between him and Pinga. After forcing Enoe, a former resident of Aowin, to surrender refugees and to pay a ransom of several slaves to the Asante for his help to their enemies, they turned their attention to troubles in the Ankobra region. At a meeting between Pinga, the representatives of the Dutch, the Asante, and the Wassa, Pinga was forced to pay about £180 to the Asante. It was hoped that the Asante and their allies would then march on to Pokoso. But after they had collected the money they quickly departed to their country, to the intense disappointment of the Dutch.[2]

The sudden departure of the Asante led to speculations as to their real intentions in coming to the neighbourhood of Axim. The Dutch adduced two conflicting interpretations. First, they held that the arrival of the Asante was a clever move on the part of Konny to get the formidable Asante to stage a mock reconciliation. Konny was accused of having used the Asante to overawe his rivals. The second, and much more plausible, reason was that the resident Asante traders at Pokoso pleaded with the Asante king to call off the attack on Konny. As a result of the threat of an Akyem invasion and the judicious use of presents by Konny, the king called his soldiers back to Asante.

A closer examination of the two explanations advanced makes it difficult to accept that of a mock reconciliation. There is no denying that the Asante came in pursuit of Enoe, who had obtained refuge with the Dutch at Axim. It is difficult to see why the Asante would have allowed themselves to be used as instruments in Konny's struggle with Pinga to achieve his end. This would involve the assumption that any group of Asante on an expedition authorized by the king could allow themselves to be diverted from their course of action by a prosperous merchant without first seeking the king's approval. Granted that in an isolated area it was not unlikely that people should be so diverted, it was highly improbable that the Asante could have maintained any secrecy in a place like Axim, where there were daily commercial contacts with the Asante capital. It

[1] N.B.K.G. 82/21, Axim to Elmina, 14 Jan. 1716.
[2] N.B.K.G. 82, Axim to Elmina 14, 24 Jan., 2 Feb., 10 Mar. 1716.

must not be forgotten that Konny at first did not leave anything to chance. He ordered a regular vigil over the approaches to his town, and asked that any Asante or Wassa people who carried arms to Pokoso should be arrested. For a satisfactory explanation of the sudden withdrawal of the Asante troops one must look elsewhere.

The second explanation appears more reasonable. That the Asante traders would seek to prevent any misfortune from befalling Konny was due to Konny's own wise commercial policy. By obtaining goods from interlopers, Konny was able to provide his customers from inland with better-quality goods at a cheaper price. Thus the Asante traders, who were known to divert their trade to wherever they could best satisfy their needs, very much depended on him. Konny was determined to eliminate the huge profits which the companies made in their trade with the Africans. In this he was successful. By 1721 he had been able to cut down the prices of European goods obtained at Pokoso by 20 per cent.[1] The complaint of the European traders was that the inland traders preferred to sell their goods to Konny. The English thought that if they succeeded in getting Konny on their side by force or by negotiation, 'it would be very advantageous to them and at the same time prove a great disappointment to interlopers'.[2] The continued survival of Konny at Pokoso was therefore in the interest of the inland traders. Apart from the impression which the traders may have made on the king of Asante, the need to have all the Asante forces together to fight the powerful state of Akyem may also have entered into the calculations of the king. Konny's friendship with the Asante court continued until his fall in 1724. In 1723, for instance, he dispatched masons, bricklayers, and carpenters to Opoku Ware of Asante,[3] apparently to help to build a palace for the king.

Apart from providing incentives for traders, Konny was not unaware of the need to preserve law and order in the Brandenburg possessions, of which by 1711 he had virtually become *de facto* ruler. He combined his trading successfully with his administrative work. An able diplomatist and a strict disciplinarian, Konny was also an accomplished strategist. In his long struggles with the Dutch and the English over the three Brandenburg possessions, he proved

[1] Atkins, op. cit., p. 450.

[2] T70/5/99, From Grosvenor, Hayes and Bleau to R.A.C., 24 May 1714; T70/6, 25 Feb. 1714, ibid., 10 June 1715, T70/1464, Komenda Diary, 29 May 1715.

[3] W.I.C. 122, Houtman to Ryxborn at Great Fredricksburg, 11 Jan. 1723.

to be a hard as well as a level-headed bargainer. His bold and firm action in 1715 quickly averted disorder and chaos at Great Fredricksburg. When the mulatto Bosman and the surgeon poisoned the chief factor, Konny threw both of them into prison and took command of the fortress from du Bois. The English rightly commented that the Governor could do nothing without the consent and prior permission of Konny. Thus they discounted the 'servile governor'[1] in their attempts to get Konny reduced to his proper size.

The dependence of the Governor on Konny came into proper relief in the events which led to the departure of du Bois for Europe. There is no evidence to support the view that the General placed the fort under the protection of the 'Negro chief'.[2] The evidence suggests that it was Konny who sent du Bois to Europe in an attempt to get the Directors of the company to take more interest in the plight of their possessions on the Gold Coast. The English unkindly remarked in 1716 that the General, who had obtained the leave of Konny 'to come off the coast', was rather escaping from the authority of Konny, whom he had unwittingly helped to grow more powerful than himself.[3]

No sooner had du Bois left the coast than Konny started to adopt measures calculated to reduce the expenses of the forts to the barest minimum. Originally he had promised to hold the three forts for fourteen months for and in the name of the king of Prussia. After that, if nothing was heard from the king, he would feel free to dispose of the possessions as he thought fit. In December 1716 he dismissed all the white employees who could not maintain themselves, and left only a commandant and a sergeant in charge of the fort.[4] At the expiry of the six months' period of grace, Konny declared his intention to sell the possessions to the French. Perhaps it was a mere threat meant to induce the English and the Dutch to redouble their bargaining and to increase the price they were prepared to pay. This is exactly what they did, because they convinced themselves that any other company that got control over the forts would still remain a mere pawn in Konny's hands.

[1] T70/6/19, From Boutri to Cape Coast, 3 Nov. 1715; N.B.K.G. 82, 11 June 1715.

[2] Ellis, op. cit., p. 91; Claridge, op. cit. i. 204. Claridge asserts that Konny was installed as caretaker of the castle until further negotiations were effected in Europe.

[3] T70/6/39, From Phipps to R.A.C., 26 Oct. 1716.

[4] T70/6/48, 12 Dec. 1716. It must be seen that it was Konny and not du Bois who placed the commandant and the sergeant in charge of the fort.

While matters thus stood unresolved on the coast, things were moving faster in Europe than Konny could have expected. In November 1717 the Dutch West India Company bought the three forts from the Brandenburg company for 6,000 ducats and twelve negro boys.[1] To pay the money and send over the boys proved easier than to take possession of the forts. In negotiating over the head of Konny, they underestimated his capacity to offer them strong and determined opposition. Konny kept the Dutch at bay for seven years. He bluntly refused to accept the validity of the deed of sale by insisting that the king of Prussia was merely his tenant, and therefore had no right to sell any property that stood on his (Konny's) land without his prior knowledge and permission.[2]

When peaceful negotiations achieved nothing, the Dutch prepared to use force. It is interesting to note that the popularity of Konny had grown so great that the Dutch found it difficult to recruit allies to fight for them. In and around Axim in particular the mere mention of Konny's name, let alone a suggestion of fighting him, made people quail. Lack of local support ruled out an assault by land and a frontal attack by sea was decided upon. After elaborate preparations they set forth in three ships fully laden with soldiers armed with carbines and pistols. They planned to demoralize Konny's forces by first sending an advance party to the shore to set fire to the houses. It was hoped that panic would grip Konny's soldiers and thus enable the Dutch to capture the fort. It was a miscalculation. The Dutch were easily outwitted. A calculating strategist, Konny had long anticipated the designs of his attackers. Scarcely had the advance guard landed than it was cut to pieces with a hail of fire from Konny's men.[3] The Dutch beat an ignominious retreat, leaving thirty-six Dutchmen, including a lieutenant, dead on the beach.[4] They, rather than Konny, had become the victims of confusion. As was to be expected, the event served to increase the fame of Konny throughout the Gold Coast.

In fulfilment of the terms of purchase, six of the twelve negro

[1] W.I.C. 124, Report of Butler on Fredricksburg, 13 June 1718; Welman, op. cit., p. 43.

[2] Atkins, in Astley, op. cit., p. 449; Welman, op. cit., p. 43.

[3] W.I.C. 124, Butler's Report to Elmina, 13 June 1718.

[4] T70/6/80, Phipps and Council to R.A.C., 12 July 1718. Surprisingly enough, the Dutch did not give the number of their losses apart from merely mentioning the death of their factor at Boutri. The date of the attack is wrongly given by Welman, Ellis, and Claridge as 1720 instead of 1718.

boys arrived in Amsterdam in December 1718, on their way to Brandenburg.[1] On the coast, however, the Dutch still had six years of scheming ahead of them before they could dislodge Konny from Great Fredricksburg Castle. The council at Elmina realized the hopelessness of any attack on Konny in which they were not supported by local soldiers. They therefore requested the Directors to send them enough goods to buy local support. This was met by the Directors with sympathetic and ready support. They regretted the failure to take the fort by assault and advised that peaceful methods should once again be adopted to deal with Konny. They suggested that Konny should be promised full and adequate compensation for the surrender of the fort. All debts which stood against his name should be written off. At the same time Bosman, the mulatto serving under Konny, should be secretly approached and promised a commission in the Dutch service if he would use his influence on Konny to hand the possessions over to the Dutch. If peaceful methods availed them nothing, then recourse should be had to force. To enable the Dutch to fight successfully when the need arose, two heavy mortars, with a promise of two more, were sent to the company on the coast.

Not only Konny, but also the English, it appears, did not consider the agreement between the Dutch and the Brandenburgers binding on them. They did not stop trying to obtain the 'propriety of the forts that belonged to the Prussians'. But it was the Dutch who appeared to have made headway with Konny. After another unsuccessful attempt to enlist the support of local states, the Dutch made a generous offer to Konny. Although Konny was prepared to accommodate them, and accepted generous gifts from the Dutch, he was determined not to sell the forts to any company. He pointed out that his place should be 'free port for all nations to trade but none to settle'.[2] And he proved that he was in earnest about establishing a free port. In September of 1721 he welcomed a Brazilian delegation that brought him gifts and requested permission to settle in his state.[3] The arrival of the Portuguese warship in Konny's waters frightened the Dutch and the English, who were determined to keep the Portuguese and the French from settling on the Gold Coast.

[1] W.I.C. 463, From the X to Elmina, 27 Dec. 1718. The request for the boys was contained in a letter dated 12 Dec. 1717.

[2] Ibid., 27 Dec. 1718.

[3] T70/6/85, 16 Dec. 1718, 14 Jan. 1719; T70/7/13, Abstract of letters from Cape Coast, 2 Nov. 1720; W.I.C. 124, From Director-General and Council to X, 19 May 1721.

But since they had played virtually all their trumps in negotiating with Konny, they decided on a new method. They agreed that Konny was suspicious and distrustful of white men. The English therefore entrusted one of their able and powerful African middlemen, Thomas Awishee, with the negotiations. In the long run, however, it was the Dutch, and not the English, who won Konny to their side. Like the English they were now prepared to give way in their claims to satisfy Konny's demands. This is clearly seen in the agreement they entered into with Konny in November 1722.

It is significant that the Dutch, who had all the time claimed to have bought the Brandenburg possessions, said nothing about the 1717 agreement which transferred the forts to them in their agreement with Konny. Perhaps by 1722 they had been convinced of the propriety of accepting Konny's contention that the ultimate ownership of the place was his. Although the agreement lasted for only two years it was significant. It was an open admission by the Dutch of their helplessness in achieving their aims without Konny's consent. Among other things it was agreed that Konny should renounce control over the three forts except for his power to nominate the Governor of Great Fredricksburg. In return the Dutch promised to pay him a monthly rental of two ounces of gold, and a yearly 'gift' of £48 for his services to them. In addition he was to be credited with trade goods worth £192 to help him in his trading business.

Had these been the only clauses in the agreement, it might not have been difficult to persuade Konny to accept it. But the Dutch sought too much at a time. They determined to curtail Konny's other actions done independently of the company. Apart from asking Konny to stop his lucrative trade with interlopers, he was no longer to be allowed to collect tolls on ships which watered in his state.[1] At best the agreement may be described as a time-saving device. Undoubtedly the Dutch were led to seek such an agreement by their fears of French, English, and Portuguese threats to win Konny's favours. Thus one appreciates their attempts to make it difficult for Konny to make approaches to other companies. What one fails to understand is why the victorious Konny should have affixed 'his mark' to the agreement. The easiest answer is that Konny might have been outmanœuvred. It is not unlikely that Bosman, who was employed as Konny's secretary, was influenced by Dutch promises to employ him in their service. With an eye on his future job, Bosman

[1] T70/7/31, From Cape Coast to R.A.C., 30 Sept. 1721.

might therefore easily have misrepresented the intentions of the Dutch, and might have misinterpreted the terms of the agreement. It was to be expected that Konny would refuse to be bound by the terms of the agreement as soon as the real intentions of the Dutch dawned on him. Two years later the Dutch had to take up arms once again against Konny.

Despite the agreement, Konny never lost sight of the need to put his defences in good order to forestall any unexpected attacks. Barely a year after its conclusion he built a strong wall, three feet wide and eight feet high, around the most vulnerable sides of his town.[1] Relations on both sides had so deteriorated that the Dutch openly prepared to take the castle by storm. This time they left nothing to chance. The days of the 'Last Prussian Negro Prince' were now numbered. In November 1724, in spite of his strong walls, Konny fell to the onslaught of the Dutch. He could not withstand the hand grenades and heavy mortars from Holland. He made his escape to an island on the River Ankobra. Later on he became a fugitive in Fante from where he moved to the court of Opoku Ware, king of Asante, in an unsuccessful attempt to interest the Asantehene in his plight and to secure help from that most powerful ruler to retrieve his fortunes.[2] But as far as we know, his fall in November 1724 marked the end of the career of the most enterprising and powerful of all the merchant princes.

A true product of the age of keen European competition on the coast, Konny studied and adopted the commercial diplomacy of his time. The most active period of his life was spent in the service of the Brandenburg African Company. His main desire was to serve faithfully the company he had helped to establish in his state. He tried unsuccessfully to inject life into the crumbling fortunes of the company. His liberal commercial policy won him the respect and love of the inland traders, and enabled him to cultivate the friendship of the Asante king, who was indubitably the most powerful ruler on the Gold Coast.

Konny's greatest drawback was the limited scope of his knowledge of the intentions and desires of the European companies with whom he came into contact. The intricacies of trade and politics in Europe never came into his calculations. He could, therefore, not

[1] W.I.C. 122, Agreement between Representatives of Director-General A. Houtman and Jan Konny, 22 Nov. 1722.

[2] W.I.C. 105, Houtman to the X, 10 Feb. 1723; T70/7/92–6, From Cape Coast Castle to R.A.C., 21 and 24 Oct. 1724, 31 Jan. 1725.

think of the Dutch negotiating over his head, let alone understand how the Brandenburgers, whom he had faithfully served for so long, could sell the forts without first consulting him. Although his alliance with inland states contributed to his successes, Konny's own character and personality were major factors in his successful career.

While firm in standing on his rights, he was also considerate. When in 1721 an English crew was tardy in paying him tolls after his accredited agent (a servant with a gold-headed cane with the initials J. C.—John Counie—engraved on the head) had demanded them, he did not hesitate to impress upon them 'I be King over me water', and to order their arrest. Yet power never blunted the fine and humane aspects of his character. He generously regaled the captives with what his house could afford. Punctilious in his manners, he never received his guests without according to them the proper ceremony. When he played host to Atkins in 1721, Konny 'stood on the shores to receive them with a guard of over twenty men under bright arms who conducted them to his house'.[1] A year later he repeated the ceremony on a grander scale. A visiting Dutch delegation was welcomed with pomp and fanfare, with a large band of horn-blowing musicians, a bodyguard of 200 men, and a salute of nine cannons. His general comportment elicited kind remarks from Atkins, who considered him 'upright and just . . . in all bargains', a man who considered what the others were thieving 'below his game'.[2]

Yet Konny seems to have been most remembered by such epithets as 'a native usurper who paved the approaches of his house with Dutchmen's skulls and drank punch from a decorated skull of unusual size'. This is an unfortunate memorial for a man who not long after his victory over the Dutch decently 'interred' his trophies in accordance with the custom of his country, and magnanimously proclaimed that 'all malice should be forgotten'.[3]

In conclusion one may say that successful trade on the Gold Coast depended on the assistance that African middlemen gave to the Europeans. The powerful merchants along the coast served as an essential link between the Europeans and the inland producers and traders. Whilst many depended solely on the Europeans, there were

[1] Ellis, op. cit., p. 92; Welman, op. cit., p. 44; Claridge, op. cit. i. 206.
[2] Atkins, op. cit., p. 450.
[3] Ibid., p. 445; Welman, op. cit., p. 48; Smith, in Astley, *Collections*, p. 477; Ellis, op. cit., p. 91; Claridge, op. cit. i. 206.

several others who combined active trade with other activities, such as farming and fishing. In the group of able and prosperous merchants, the careers of men like Akrosan brothers of Fetu, Asomani of Akwamu, John Kabes of Komenda, and John Konny of Ahanta overshadowed those of their contemporaries. They all became chiefs in the states or overshadowed their rulers by virtue of their wealth. The Akrosan brothers nurtured the Swedish and Danish companies in Fetu. Asomani became the hero of the successful Akwamu capture of Christiansborg Castle. The fortunes of the English at Komenda depended on John Kabes, whilst Konny not only commanded Great Fredericksburg Castle but virtually ruled the whole of Ahanta and proved himself the staunchest prop of the Brandenburg African Company. When all is said and done, they were all men who sought to improve the lot of their own traders by providing them with the necessary incentives. By reason of their varied and interesting, yet successful, lives, one may conveniently call them the 'merchant princes' of the Gold Coast.

# CHAPTER VII

# European Trade and African Politics

AT the turn of the seventeenth century Asante conquered Denkyira and made a dramatic entry into the politics of the Gold Coast. From 1701 this hitherto unknown Asante became, politically and economically, the most important single state. Both African and European commercial and political diplomacy were geared to this rising nation, which was soon to dominate the affairs of the Gold Coast. The history of the country became virtually the history of the relations of Asante with its neighbours. In 1701 it became the first inland state to receive an accredited European representative at its court. In that year the Dutch sent the sub-factor David van Nyendaal 'to congratulate Zaay, the king of Asijante'. Nyendaal remained in Kumasi for over a year. It was in 1702 that he returned to the coast.

While it cannot be denied that 1701 was a significant landmark in the history of the Gold Coast, it must be pointed out that it did not immediately establish Asante hegemony over all the states that had formerly been under Denkyira. There remained wars still to be fought, and a system of administrative control to be evolved to suit the expanding frontiers of the Asante empire. But despite the work ahead, it may be said that the basis of contact between Asante and the coast was well established. The Asante advance also completely changed the political *status quo* by giving birth to some far-reaching alliances, which might be said to have been the direct outcome of the fear of the new Asante nation. It is true that some of the alliances had their roots in pre-Asante times, but it was because of the fear of Asante that near-moribund alliances and co-operations were revived. One of the most significant developments resulting from the events of 1701 was the internal unity which manifested itself in the Fante and Akyem states.

Admittedly the political boundaries on the map of the Gold Coast remained, to a large extent, as they had been at the beginning of the seventeenth century, yet most of them remained in name only. In power and substance many small states had become satelites of larger ones. States such as Axim, Ahanta, Eguafo, Fetu, Sabu, Accra,

and others which had been mentioned by de Marees in 1601 could still be found along the coast.[1] In 1629 a clearer and a better sketch of the states of the Gold Coast was made by the Dutch. For the first time twenty-nine inland states were made known. The most imporant of these were Igwira, Inkassa, Wassa, Wanqui, Bono, Twifo, Akani, Akwamu, Quahoe, Inta, and Insoko.[2] The 1629 map appears to have formed the basis of Dapper's description of the Gold Coast in 1668.[3] But neither the anonymous Dutch cartographer nor Dapper had any knowledge of such important states as Adansi, Denkyira, and Asante, which grew into powerful empire-states in the course of the seventeenth century. Barbot, on the other hand, attempted to identify Inta with Asante.[4] It is true that Asante later extended its power into the territory of Inta, but there is no evidence to support the assertion that Inta and Asante were one and the same state.

Two of the inland states, Akyem and Akwamu, that appeared on the 1629 map grew into great powers in the course of the century. In 1629, however, it was Akyem which was well thought of by the European traders; while Akwamu could be summarily discounted as a 'predatory nation' which had little trade, Akyem (Ahim, Akan, Great Akany) was generally described as a 'delijcaet volck en rijk van slaven'.[5]

Although Akyem was commercially important, it traded mainly inland and did not come to the coast. The furthest south Akyem traders were allowed to come was the *A.b.c.* (Abonce) of the 1629 map, which was the market of Accra. The boundaries of Akyem as well as its political might were not resolved by the end of the seventeenth century. This is clearly illustrated by the wild assertions of contemporary writers. Barbot asserted that it extended far inland to North Africa. Bosman, however, did not think that it touched on the Mandinga territory.[6] Both statements have two things in common; ignorance of the real extent of states inland and an exaggerated belief in Akyem as a large state.

Of all the states of the Gold Coast, however, it was Akani (Accany, Hacany, Acany, Acames) that received the maximum publicity from

[1] De Marees, *Beschrivinghe end historische Verhael van het Gout Koninckrijck van Ginea . . .* 1602, *ed. S.P.* l'Honore Naber (The Hague, 1912), pp. 211–13.
[2] O.W.I.C., Luepen, *Collections*, nb. 743, 'Caerte des Landschapen van de Gout Kust', 25 Dec. 1629.
[3] Dapper, op. cit., pp. 433–58.
[4] Barbot, in Churchill, *Collections*, v. 189.
[5] Map 743, Dapper, op. cit., pp. 458–9.
[6] Barbot, op. cit., p. 189; Bosman, op. cit., p. 185.

the Europeans. From the second decade of the sixteenth century the Portuguese initiated the practice of sending regular presents to the king of Akani and other inland rulers. Other nationals who came after them continued the practice in the interest of trade.[1] Akani was particularly singled out for favours because of the great reputation of its traders and the purity of its gold. Its traders travelled far and wide to all the important trading centres, exchanging imported goods for gold and locally made cotton cloths. On the Gold Coast it was far and away the largest exporter of gold. Pure and unadulterated gold was known as Acany (Chica, Sika) gold. The Akani were known to have supplied about two-thirds of all the gold from the Gold Coast.[2]

The commercial importance attached to the Akani traders tended to obscure the political reality. The Europeans were apt to designate all inland traders who came to their forts, from Winneba in the east to Shama in the west, as Akani traders, even though they might have come from many different states. They were unable to ascertain what this state really was. A glance at the 1629 map confirms one's belief in this. All the states in the Pra-Offin-Birim reaches were generally described as Akani. The Akani of the seventeenth century was, if anything, a loose confederation of states with kinship ties.[3]

There is a group of historians who seek to identify the present-day Assin states—Attandansu and Apemenim—with the state of Akani mentioned by the early writers.[4] It cannot be denied that modern Assin formed part of the Akani confederacy of states. Indeed from 1572 the term Assin was gradually becoming known to some of the European writers. It was known as 'Asaas grande' by the Portuguese. It was this same state which Müller referred to as Assingrud. This state only carried, but did not produce, gold. The mines were situated at Tafoe, a few days' journey to the north of Assin. Müller asserts that Assingrud was the 'first land of the great

[1] A. Brasio, *Monumenta Missionaria Africana* (Lisbon, 1952) ii. 246–7, 430. I am grateful to Dr. Birmingham for this piece of information. Pereira, *Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis*, ed. Crone, Haykluyt Society, series ii, ed. Kimble, lxxix, p. 120.

[2] Dapper, op. cit., p. 458.

[3] Ratelband, op. cit., p. xcii.

[4] Reindorf, op. cit., p. 57. Identifies Agyensam, king of Akani as king of Koshea in Assin. Claridge, op. cit., i. 144; Wilks, 'The Northern Factor in Asanti History', *J.A.H.* 2 (1961), 28; Ward, op. cit., p. 97. Ward, however, doubts the existence of Akani as a separate state. Mereyowitz, *Akan Traditions*, p. 96, *The Sacred State of Akans*, p. 21. She identifies Akani with the Akan state of Twifu-Hemang. But this was only one of the states.

kingdom of Accania',[1] which clearly shows that there were other states which formed part of the Akani kingdom. Since Assin was a southern state relatively near the coast, its inhabitants, who were principally traders, were better known along the coast than others to the north of Assin.

Lack of detailed information apart, the fact that all the people who speak Twi and its related dialects were and still are generally referred to as Akans might have led to the ready but mistaken application of the linguistic term to the people. Furthermore, the existence of a state of Twifo side by side with the Twi language easily leads one to think it logical to refer to the confederated states from whence many of the traders came as Akani. It is significant that the lines of migration of most of the modern Akan states are traceable to the area described as Akani in the seventeenth century. Almost all the ruling clans of Akan states such as Akyem, Kwawu, Asante, and Akwamu trace their immediate ancestry to the well-watered regions of the Offin, Pra, and Birim rivers, especially to Adansi and Denkyira. But the absence of the names of such important states as Adansi and Denkyira in the European records must not lead one into thinking that such states had not long existed. They were all embraced by the one known as Akani. What is lacking in the contemporary records is well compensated for by traditional sources.

By the second half of the seventeenth century the presence of many rival European nations on the Gold Coast was adversely affecting the political arrangement of the country. The great Akani confederation was falling apart. The records stress disruptive wars which brought trade to a virtual standstill. There were wars between the southern Akani confederacy of Accany (Assin) and Twifo, which led to a temporary stoppage of trade when the resident Akani merchants were called up inland for service to their state. It was at this time of incessant wars that Adansi was defeated by Denkyira. In 1659 it was reported that the wars in the 'distant districts of Adansee and especially that of Tuyfere [Twifo] with the Accanist' had proved a hindrance to trade. The report continued to assert that 'Adansi had quietly disappeared'.[2] That Adansi ceased to be a powerful state in 1659 is a fact. It is, however, difficult to accept Valckenburg's contention that it had ceased to exist. A few years

[1] W. J. Müller, *The African State of Fetu*, ed. D. Birmingham, 'A Note on the Kingdom of Fetu', *G.N.Q.* 9 (1966), 30–3; Brasio, op. cit., pp. 246–7.

[2] Furley Collections, Dutch Records, Report of Valckenburg to XIX, 1659.

later Müller recorded a war between Alance (Adansi) and Akani over the payment of customs duties and tolls. Between 1669 and 1700 Adansi was overshadowed by Denkyira. It was not until the rise of Asante that it became known again to the Europeans. Adansi might have been the same state that Bosman called Ananse and described, together with Asante, as one of those states that were 'lately known'.[1] It was reputed at this time to be very rich in gold. Although Adansi was not well known to the seventeenth-century writers, traditionally it is one of the most important Akan states. It is believed to be the 'first organised Akan state in the interior from which other states learnt the art of government'.[2]

Adansi and its kindred states that formed the northern part of the Akani confederacy were advantageously sited to tap the gold trade. They occupied the most important source of the gold. (Even to the present day Adansi is the main source of the gold-mining industry of Ghana.) Traders from here had access to the Mande market at Begho, and when the arrival of the Europeans along the coast diverted trade from the north to the south, these states did not lose their position of vantage. Whether by accident or design the states found themselves almost equidistant from the markets of Bono Kingdom and the European establishments on the coast. Little wonder then that the southern Akani state of Assin came to play the middleman's role in the Gold Coast trade, just as the Dyulas and the Hausas did on the south-western and south-eastern termini of trade between the Gold Coast and the medieval Sudanese states.

The disintegration of the Akani confederacy of states is closely tied up with the arrival of many European traders on the Gold Coast and the change in emphasis of exportable commodities from gold and ivory to slaves. The gold from Adansi and its neighbouring states had enabled them to increase their consumption of foreign goods. The desire to increase their purchasing power to acquire more of these consumer goods sharpened the acquisitive instincts of the states and necessitated a change in their political theory, which was based on natural reproduction and kinship ties. The introduction of European goods brought in its train European norms of individualism and economic exploitation. It is significant that the period witnessed an increased supply of firearms, which hastened the disintegration of the system of loose alliances.

[1] Müller, trans. by Birmingham, op. cit., p. 32; Bosman, op. cit., p. 69.
[2] Reindorf, op. cit., p. 48.

There is no denying that all the states that emerged in the Gold Coast, especially the Akan states, resulted from the imposition of the power of one lineage or family on the others. This was mainly achieved through force or diplomacy; but it was diplomacy that held many states together. Prior to the break-up of the Akani confederacy, and the eventual defeat of Adansi in the 1660s, states were built out of groups of kindred interests who settled together for mutual benefits. At times numerically strong groups managed to get themselves accepted as rulers to provide protection for weaker ones. Where there were wars, their effects were less devastating than they subsequently became. With the European economic ideas eating into the social and political fabric of the indigenous population, the old order was ill equipped to withstand the new changes. Thus it was impossible for a state like Adansi, which was traditionally known to have based its fame on the 'wisdom of its great God [Bona] and not on force',[1] to survive. The competitive spirit spelt disaster for loose alliances.

It must be pointed out that in the first half of the seventeenth century, a period of relative political stability, there were wars on the Gold Coast. From the 1630s the Europeans reported inland wars in which they lent a few muskets to their allies. But those wars appear to have been more trade wars disputing rights of way, such as those between Abrem and Fetu, or civil wars over succession disputes. Their political effects were inconsequential, their duration short. On the whole the political stability of the African states was due to the comparative scarcity of firearms. This was because Portugal was forbidden by the Pope to sell guns to heathens and Muslims. The Dutch West Indian Company was also officially not allowed to sell guns. In spite of the sale of firearms by interlopers, their distribution was mainly confined to a few coastal states. From the 1650s, however, the arrival of many different trading nations on the Gold Coast made any restrictions on firearms difficult to enforce. The evidence suggests that Dutch and English interlopers drove a roaring trade in firearms, which the African states began to acquire in large quantities. This resulted in the Dutch Director-General requesting the restriction on the sale of arms to be lifted.[2]

That the injunction against the sale of arms was well observed by the Dutch is evidenced by the list of goods found in the various

[1] Reindorf, op. cit., p. 49.
[2] O.W.I.C. 58, Report from Valckenburg to the XIX, 4 June 1658.

forts. The inventory of goods in 1645 made no mention of guns. The column headed 'ammunition of war' showed a general lack of such ammunition. At Moure and Axim the total number of muskets did not exceed seventy-five pieces; Shama and Accra between them had only eleven muskets. The only materials which might be described as 'offensive weapons' were the 13,767 knives and cutlasses which were requisitioned in 1647.[1] On the whole the emphasis in imported goods was on pewter basins, cotton prints, and such luxury goods as looking-glasses, beads, and carpets. In the 1650s the situation changed.

In addition to the firearms imported from Europe, the Africans supplemented their supply by manufacturing traditional weapons such as 'knives, daggers and swords' from the iron bars that came from Europe. But on the whole it might be asserted that the use of guns had caught on with the local states. The Dutch reported in 1658 that 'only muskets sell well' and that the 'natives take the field with thousands of them'.[2] While the Dutch were prevented from trading in firearms, the English East Indian Company, which took control of English interests between 1658 and 1665, appears to have made huge profits from the sale of muskets. The rate at which guns were brought in by the English so alarmed the African states along the coast that they sought to prevent the excessive flow of the deadly weapons into the interior. In October 1658 the English General Stavely could not openly unload the muskets which arrived on the coast for 'fear that the English would incur the displeasure of the Africans who might even refuse to trade with us'. The fear was justified, because already he had been requested by the Akani traders and the chiefs of the coastal states to stop importing firearms, 'except what the English needed for their own defence'. Apart from the request of the Africans, Stavely justly realized that it was 'death for the Dutch to bring any', and therefore entreated the Directors in London 'not to send any more amunition of war'.[3]

Despite the entreaties from the Gold Coast, the evidence again suggests that guns and gunpowder continued to be sent in large quantities. Between July 1658 and November 1661 the East India Company sent 5,531 muskets and a large quantity of gunpowder

[1] Ratelband, op. cit., pp. 361–84.

[2] O.W.I.C. 58, Report of Valckenburg to the XIX, June 1658.

[3] O.C. 2671, From Gold Coast, Cormantine Castle to E.I.C. 27 Oct. 1658.

to the Gold Coast.[1] Little wonder then that men like John Claessen in the early 1660s could command as many as 2,000 to 4,000 musketeers. Successive English companies continued to send large quantities of firearms to the Gold Coast. The *Arcany Merchant*, which arrived on the Gold Coast in 1668, brought 2,000 pieces of iron bars and 200 muskets. The warehouse journals of the English mention a number of unsold firearms. There were 929 'old and damaged muskets', 38 carbines, 66 musket barrels, and 110 barrels of gunpowder remaining at Cape Coast warehouse in 1679. Two years later the number had substantially increased. There were 148 carbines, 104 musket barrels, 2,115 muskets, and 600 small barrels of gunpowder. The list for 1687 contained *inter alia* 576 firelock muskets and 3,037 matchlock muskets.[2]

The great demand for firearms is further seen from the fact that it became fashionable for African potentates to demand payments due to them from Europeans in firearms. In 1687 the rents due to the king of Fetu and his elders were paid with twenty-six matchlock muskets and barrels of gunpowder. At times the Europeans provided loans to states about to go to war in the form of firearms, on condition that the proceeds from the war—slaves—would be sold only to them. In 1680, for instance, the English entrusted the caboceer Hensaw with 100 muskets, 6 fuzees, and 4 barrels of gunpowder which were 'to be paid for in slaves'.[3] The importation of firearms had so increased by 1680 that the local markets became surfeited with them. The Europeans complained that 'powder has late grown a mighty drug'. The Dutch, whose guns were in demand on the coast, greatly profited by the gun-running. The English were therefore forced to import firearms from Holland, even at the displeasure and to the intense indignation of 'the English shotgun makers'.[4] At the turn of the seventeenth century the Dutch were annually selling about 20,000 tons of gunpowder. The English estimated that to

[1] E.I.C., Letter Books, From London to the Gold Coast ii. 151–2, 167–71, 209, 253–7, 266–9, 308–11, 323–9, iii. 42, 62–6, July 1658, Nov. 1661.

[2] T70/365, R.A.C. to Cape Coast Castle, 12 Aug. 1679; T70/367, Cape Coast Account Book, Nov. 1681; T70/372, Cape Coast Account Book, Feb. 1687.

[3] T70/372/194, Accounts for March 1687; T70/372/129, 10 Nov. 1686. Customs on ships docking at Cape Coast were paid for with 66 matchlocks. In 1687 the Fetu king received three months' advance payment of rentals in muskets and barrels of gunpowder. See T70/372/206, April 1687, T70/365/ff. 51, 80, 92, Mar. July, Sept. 1680.

[4] T70/20/70, Bradley to R.A.C., 7 Dec. 1680; T70/169/28, Petition against the importation of Dutch guns, 17 Oct. 1684.

compete favourably with their rivals in the slave and gold trade they would at one time need about 500 carbines, 100 blunderbusses, 10,000 flints, 5,000 knives, 50 sword hangers, 800 half-barrels of gunpowder, 50 cases of spirits, and 200 tuns of Barbados rum.[1]

By the end of the century the Africans had become very adept in handling guns. It was reported that 'tis not unpleasant to see them exercise their army, they handled their arms so cleverly, discharging them several ways, one sitting, the second creeping or lying'.[2] Their smiths had also learnt to repair the old and damaged guns. 'By new tempering of the lock as to exceed what it was before' they were able to turn 'old guns sold them that would not fire to such perfection as scarcely ever to miss': they kept their guns as bright as silver.[3] Some local chiefs and successful businessmen possessed a few cannon. These were, however, used not for warfare but for firing on ceremonial occasions. The kings of Asebu, Akwamu, and Denkyira, and merchant princes like the Akrosan brothers, John Kabes, and John Konny, may be cited as among those who owned cannon.

With such a massive array of firearms and the willingness of the Europeans to vie with each other in supplying the deadly weapons, warfare, not unnaturally, underwent great changes. The need to subjugate and hold others under tributary status so as to increase one's purchasing power brought about a disintegration of the old political system and ushered in an era of the emergence and growth of politically and economically viable states on the Gold Coast. But surprisingly enough it was not those states which first became acquainted with firearms that led in the empire-building. On the contrary, the immediate effect of the proliferation of firearms on most of the coastal states was to intensify their rivalries and heighten their fissionary tendencies.

There were two main reasons why empire-building on the Gold Coast began from inland and not from the coast. In the first place, the forest zone, especially the areas where gold was readily available, had for a long time been drawn into constant communication with the Sudanese kingdoms in the savannah region. Side by side with trade, the political thinking of the northern empires came to influence them. What was more, the fact that the states were related by kinship

[1] N.B.K.G. 57/37, van Sevenhuysen to the X, 21 June 1700; T70/22/1, Sir T. Dalby to R.A.C., 26 Aug. 1705; T70/5/57, Sir T. Dalby to R.A.C., 8 May 1709.

[2] Bosman, op. cit., p. 156.

[3] Loyer, in Churchill, *Collections* xi. 436.

ties made it easier for the related families to be brought together. Thus with muskets gained from the European trade usually replacing horses as the principal military means of action, territorial aggrandizement for ambitious states became an easy possibility. The need to come together to control the long-distance trade routes became more imperative. It can be said that the political know-how was available and that the introduction of firearms acted as a catalyst in the empire-building. Secondly, whereas on the coast European interference militated against the formation of bigger political units, in the inland states, further away from the immediate scrutiny of the Europeans, the African states who embarked on empire-building were able to present a *fait accompli* which the Europeans could do nothing with but accept as the new order.[1] Of all the many coastal states, it was only Fante which maintained its independence and attempted, however temporarily, to effect political unity and to form the nucleus of an early Fante confederacy at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

Of the political developments on the Gold Coast in the seventeenth century, it was the growth of the Akwamu empire which received most attention from the European traders. This was because the area that first came under Akwamu control was the coastal state of Accra. Thus Akwamu itself became a coastal power, enjoying ground rents from the European trading companies. It is therefore understandable that Akwamu should receive better coverage from the Europeans, whose trade was directly affected by its wars. In 1629 Akwamu was merely a nuisance to African and European traders. The contemporary writers summarily dismissed it as a 'predatory nation'.[2] The reason was that Akwamu's early attempts at incorporating other states in its bid for an empire greatly disrupted trade. In 1646, for instance, the Dutch were forced to step in to effect a settlement of disputes between Akwamu and Accra. But the rising Akwamu could not be held in check for long by reconciliatory measures on the part of the Europeans that tended to thwart its ambition to gain direct access to the European forts on the coast. By the middle of the seventeenth century Akwamu's hold on the petty states lying on the trade routes to Accra had been well established. Having thus gained

[1] For more about European interference in coastal politics see Chapter IV, for the effect of the new order on African social and political systems in the eighteenth century see I. A. Akinjobin, 'Dahomey and its Neighbours, 1708–1818' (Ph.D. thesis, London, 1963).

[2] Map 743, 25 Dec. 1629, see Appendix.

in men and raw materials provided by the tributary states, Akwamu embarked on a long campaign of territorial aggrandizement that was to carry its victorious arms to a distance of over 200 miles east of Accra.[1]

Akwamu's hold on the trade routes leading to Accra proved a source of constant irritation to the latter, for, in effect, it meant eventual commercial strangulation for Accra. Akwamu's desire to gain direct access to the coast was in direct opposition to the policy of the Accra kings, who made it a point to exclude from direct contact with the coast all but their nationals. It was in pursuance of such a policy that Accra instituted an inland market at Abonce (*A.b.c.*), a few miles away from its capital. Abonce was the southernmost terminus for all the inland traders.[2] In addition to commercial considerations, practical politics dictated that Akwamu's bid for empire-building should be directed to the south. On its northwestern frontier, it would not match its power with the powerful state of Akyem. To the south-west was Fante, which, though politically disunited, could muster enough fighting men to repel any attacks. It was Accra which provided the line of least resistance; hence the Akwamu conquest of Accra.

In 1677 Akwamu launched an attack on Great Accra, the inland capital of Accra. In the war the Ga lost their king but preserved their independence. One of the princes, Ofori, made his escape to Little Accra on the coast, where he established his court, but two years later Akwamu again attacked Ofori in his new capital. But again they were repulsed, thanks to the help offered Accra by the Danes and the English. The English ship *Isabella* was dispatched from Cape Coast to help in 'releasing of Affori [*sic*] King of Accra'.[3] However, the fortunes of war turned a year later when Accra was completely overrun by Akwamu. The successful Akwamu attack on Accra was due, in part, to the help offered them by the English. Accurately sensing the outcome of the war in 1680, the English quickly changed sides and threw in their support for Akwamu. They showered presents on Ahensan (Ansa Sasraku), the Akwamu king who successfully led the attack on Accra. In September 1680 they lent him 100 muskets and four barrels of gunpowder. Before then they had already

[1] For more detailed information on Akwamu see Wilks 'The Rise of the Akwamu Empire, 1650–1710', *T.H.S.G.* 3, part ii (Achimota, 1957).

[2] Map 743, 25 Dec. 1629; Dapper, op. cit., p. 549.

[3] T70/635/12, Bradley to R.A.C., 1679.

offered help. In July when he was in Akwamu, apparently preparing for the war against Accra, the English left him in no doubt of their readiness to lend him support. They manifested this by sending him six fuzees as presents. Perhaps the willingness with which the English went to the aid of Akwamu was due to their desire to see a speedy termination of the Accra–Akwamu struggles, which had interfered with trade. But when the war had ended the Europeans had to wait longer than they had expected for the normalization of relations in the neighbourhood of Accra. They complained that 'Ahensa's continual wars in those parts [around Accra] had adversely affected their trade.' As soon as the war ended, the English hastened to win the support of Akwamu. They quickly dispatched presents consisting of a scarlet cloth and a case of spirits to 'congratulate Ahensaw the conqueror of Accra'.[1] The practice of siding with factions and states in inter-state disputes was adopted by all the European traders. This policy was thrown into relief by the outspoken Sir Dalby Thomas, who, in 1709, bluntly declared his support for the Akwamu despite the help the other companies gave to the Ga. He elected to support Akwamu because he realized that it was 'likely to obtain the better and promises great things in our favour'.[2]

With the defeat of Accra in 1680, Akwamu became a coastal power. Now in direct contact with the Europeans, and enjoying the ground rents accruing from the three European forts, Akwamu was able to embark on an ambitious policy of territorial expansion. Its capacity to procure firearms was only limited by its purchasing power, which had been greatly enhanced by the regular rentals it collected from the English, Dutch, and Danes. In addition to what was due to him, the king of Akwamu's control over the trade routes leading to Accra boosted his credit-worthiness with the Europeans. By the end of the seventeenth century Akwamu had extended its power as far as east of Whydah. Its northern frontiers touched on Kwawu, which was reduced to a tributary state in 1710.[3] On the western frontier it subjugated Agona, and allied itself with the new powerful state of Fante. Its friendship with the rising power of Asante to the north-west of Akyem, and the former's constant

[1] T70/635/51/3, Mar., July, Sept. 1680; T70/16/76, Grenhill and Council to R.A.C., 27 Oct. 1683. Ahensaw may be identified with the Akwamu king Ansa Sasraku, who is credited to have conquered Accra in 1680; T70/370/16/12, Grenhill to R.A.C., 12 July 1684.

[2] T70/5/50, Sir Dalby Thomas to R.A.C., 8 Jan. 1709.

[3] T70/5/70, 9 Apr., Wilks, 'Akwamu', *T.H.S.G.* (1957), p. 108.

struggles with Akyem, assured it of relative calmness on its western frontier.

Antedating the Akwamu empire was the rise of the inland state of Denkyira. Although Bosman reported that it had risen to power and fame only in the 'past fifteen or sixteen years'[1] (that is around 1684), his statement cannot be wholly correct. It refers only to the last phase of Denkyira expansion, when it turned its attention southwards to control the routes leading to the coast. In fact Denkyira's foundation goes back to the early 1600s, measuring an average of some ten to twelve years for the reigns of its kings, for Boa Amponsem, the king who died around 1692, was the eighth king of Denkyira. Thus by the 1690s the state had been in existence for about a century. That the Europeans remained ignorant of Denkyira until the 1680s was due to the fact that the first phase of its struggles and political expansion was to the north. Thus the absence of Denkyira from the Dutch map of 1629 and from Dapper's work of 1668 is explained. It is conceivable that the cartographer might have heard nothing about Denkyira, nor was Dapper's silence over it surprising, because the latter based his work on materials on the Gold Coast which had been collected in the first half of the seventeenth century.

Correlating traditional with documentary evidence one is able to establish for certain when Denkyira defeated Adansi. Valckenburg's report of 1659 mentioned 'wars in the distant districts of Adansee' that led to its near annihilation. This was probably the war between Adansi and Denkyira, since tradition attributes the defeat to Wirempe Ampem, the sixth ruler of Denkyira.[2] The wars which Valckenburg reported to have led to the fall of Adansi in 1659 were surely Wirempe Ampem's struggles with Adansi. Even before Wirempe Ampem's reign, a firm foundation had already been laid for the administrative and military system of the kingdom.

The task of devising a strong foundation was accomplished by the first three rulers of Denkyira, under whose rule the state was administratively and militarily divided among wing chiefs who in times of

[1] Bosman, op. cit., p. 73. The English edition does not mention the dates.

[2] J. K. Kumah, 'The Rise and Fall of Denkyira' (M.A. thesis, Legon, 1965); 'The Kingdom of Denkyira', *G.N.Q.* 9 (1966), 33–5, Kumah's work is the most up to date on Denkyira; K. Ameyaw, 'Abankeseso and Abuakwa' stool histories collected by the Institute of African Studies, IAS, KA. 9/8 (Apr. 1966). They differ slightly in the names and chronology of the Denkyira kings. Reindorf, op. cit., pp. 41–51. Reindorf's list is completely different from the other two. The present writer has adopted the list of the first two.

war took on the role of generals. Those tasks having been accomplished, it became necessary to devise a means to maintain national unity. Like Asante after her, Denkyira evolved an all-embracing symbol for the whole state. It was because of this that a state stool, *Abankamdwa*, a sword, and *Sasatia*, the executioner's knife, were created as sacred objects. These objects served as a convenient means to render mystical the military power of the state founders, whose power and authority at one and the same time became social, political, and religious. This was a practice which was perfected by the Asante in later years.

The firm foundation laid by the early rulers allowed the subsequent ones to extend the political boundaries of Denkyira and to improve and enrich the material and cultural lives of the kings. These in turn enhanced its fame. While one ruler was said to have instituted a band of singers to glorify and perpetuate the memories of their heroes, another is believed to have added more golden and silver ornaments. With its wealth, power, and glory, the court of Denkyira became the frequent resort of princes from tributary states, who came to serve their apprenticeship in the art of government and to learn court manners. One of such princely students who studied at Abankeseso, the Denkyira capital, under Boa Amponsem in the 1670s was Osei Tutu, the traditional founder of Asante nation. Tradition asserts that Osei Tutu was once a sword bearer at Denkyira.[1] Here in Denkyira, Osei Tutu was said to have met Ɔkɔmfo Anɔkye, who became his right-hand man in the task of nation-building. Whilst at Abankeseso, Osei Tutu is said to have intrigued with Bonsua, a niece of the Denkyira king, and to have made his escape to Akwamu, another powerful Akan state.

Initially Denkyira confined itself to the extension of its territory to the north in order to control the routes which led to the northern markets of Bono-Manso and Begho. It was in pursuit of such an objective that it conquered Adansi and the Asantemanso states that formed the nucleus of the Asante nation. The last twenty years saw the extension of Denkyira's power southwards towards the coast.

Until it undertook this direct imperial drive to the south, Denkyira merchants transacted their trade through Wassa and Assin. This indirect contact with trading centres to the south was dictated by the need to concentrate on the north, where the lack of firearms made conquest comparatively easy; otherwise Denkyira would have had

[1] Reindorf, op. cit., p. 51; Fuller, *Ashanti, A Vanished Dynasty*, p. 16.

to engage itself on two fronts at the same time. At times when conditions were favourable, merchants from Denkyira travelled with 'Accanesse either to Sama, Commendo, Mina or Cape Coast'.[1] Whilst such a policy was convenient in the early years and enabled Denkyira to have a period of consolidation politically and commercially in the 1680s, Denkyira soon came to realize that effective control over the southern routes would be as politically wise as it would be economically advantageous. In the first phase of the southern drive Denkyira defeated Sefwi (Encassar), Wassa, and Aowin,[2] and came to control the westernmost trade route through which trade came to the European establishments between Komenda and Assini. Economically the conquest gave it control of the rich gold mines of the defeated states. The first objective achieved, Denkyira turned its attention to the south-eastern states in an effort to spread its control and influence. In 1688, for instance, it stood ready to assist Agona against Akwamu. Denkyira also tried to overrun Fetu, but its efforts were thwarted by the Europeans, who, as soon as an invasion was threatened, bribed Denkyira to put it off. Its last victorious war in the seventeenth century was fought against King Agyensam of Koshea in Assin (southern Akani). The war reduced Assin to the 'utmost poverty and inability to defend itself'. It also drove her to contract a heavy debt with the English.[3] It enabled Denkyira, however, to safeguard its trade on the routes that reached down to Cape Coast and Moure. On the other hand it proved politically disastrous for the victors. From 1698 the Assin king of Koshea tried to turn the court of Osei Tutu of Asante against Denkyira. His presence at Kumasi might have greatly contributed to the timing of the Asante war against Denkyira (1699–1701).

By 1699 Denkyira stood at the height of its power and fame. It towered over all other states in its social, economic, and political prestige. Its power and authority spread over 200 miles westwards, from across the Pra to the Tano. It buttressed the defences of its eastern districts by pushing its frontiers to touch those of Akyem, its friendly ally. Northwards it had an indeterminate boundary which enclosed much of present-day Asante. Its control over the sources of the gold supply enabled Denkyira to purchase the firearms

[1] Barbot, op. cit., p. 189.

[2] Bosman, op. cit., pp. 4, 68, 70; T70/11/125, Buckeridge to R.A.C., 28 May 1698; T70/374, Cape Coast Account Book, Jan. 1699.

[3] Reindorf, op. cit., p. 57.

needed for the power struggle and territorial expansion in the seventeenth century. Its political power was adequately matched by its commercial influence. The European companies endeavoured to secure its friendship. Official Denkyira policy was also to encourage free trade with the coastal towns.

Towards the end of the seventeenth century Denkyira had taken over from Assin as the most important inland state trading in gold and slaves with the Europeans. Little wonder then that European embassies were sent to Denkyira rather than to Assin. An instance in 1692 eloquently illustrates this assertion. Early in that year representatives from three European companies, the Brandenburgers, the Dutch, and the English, went to Denkyira with presents to Boa Amponsem, 'who desired to live in good understanding with the Europeans'.[1] Just like the Europeans on the coast, Boa Amponsem took positive steps to ensure that Denkyira traders got a fair deal from the coastal traders. This he did by appointing his resident trade representative on the coast. The resident's duty, no doubt, was to see to it that the king and his subjects were well treated by the Europeans and the coastal traders. The post of the king's representative was well respected by the Europeans. For example, in 1698 the English registered their sorrow and sent condolences to the Denkyira king on the death of Ampem. The company sent gifts consisting of rum, gunpowder, and blue cloth to the Denkyira king 'to inter Anpim his resident here . . . whose body was carried up'.[2] The prestige accorded to Denkyira as a commercial nation is seen from the fact that its capital, Abankeseso, was described as an ancient market. It was ready to fight any power which interfered with trade. The war with Assin in 1697 was to open up the trade routes. Denkyira promised after it had defeated Assin that 'nothing shall stop trade which they will encourage'.[3] It therefore becomes understandable that the immediate effect of Asante's defeat of Denkyira was a power vacuum which in turn resulted in the disruption of trade routes. There was no state in the immediate hinterland and on the coast that possessed power and prestige to impose peace within which trade could thrive. Even after fourteen years the Dutch could nostalgically wish for the time when Denkyira provided a framework for peaceful

[1] Bosman, op. cit., p. 219.

[2] T70/373, Cape Coast Castle Accounts, Nov, 1698.

[3] T70/374, Buckeridge to R.A.C., 22 June 1698; T70/11/125, N. Buckeridge, to R.A.C., 28 May, 1 Sept. 1698.

trade. During the Asante attack on Aowin in 1715, the Dutch expressed the fear that trade would stagnate just as it had for some years following the defeat of Denkyira. During that time trade languished on the windward coast.[1]

Denkyira's interest in trade and its inordinate ambition to secure as many European goods as possible eventually led to its ruin. At the height of its power Denkyira controlled the mines of Wassa, Sefwi, Aowin, Assin, and Asante. These states fed the Denkyira treasury with exorbitant and burdensome tributes that were needed to buy firearms so that they could pursue a policy of territorial expansion and suppress revolts in the disgruntled tributary states. If anything had been given back in return, things might have taken a different turn. But this was far from the case. Apart from providing court education for young princes, there is no indication that the tributary states benefited much from Denkyira's rule. It may be argued that the peace imposed by Denkyira rule encouraged profitable commerce for all the states. This might well have been so. But it cannot be denied that what was gained from trade was mostly lost again in tributes to the court of Denkyira. The evidence suggests that Denkyira grew richer at the expense of its tributary states. The war of 1697, for instance, reduced Assin to abject poverty. Power and glory blinded Denkyira to the plight of its tributaries. From its high eminence it 'looked upon all other negroes with a contemptible eye'. It became warlike and overbearing, with the result that it ruined the once prosperous states of Aowin, Twifo, Adom, and Wassa which came under its rule.[2]

A tributary state which prevaricated in the payment of its tributes was quickly visited with Denkyira armies. In 1700, for instance, apparently needing more money for its war against Asante, Denkyira invaded Twifo with a large army and demanded over £800 from Akafo, the Twifo king.[3] This kind of treatment was not calculated to endear it as an overlord to the subordinate states, who 'impatiently wished its downfall'.[4] Traditional accounts agree with the European sources in depicting Denkyira as a hard taskmaster. It was the excessive and insulting tribute imposed on the Asante which led to the Asante war of independence. Denkyira is said to have demanded

[1] N.B.K.G. 82, From H. Harring and Council to X, 9 Sept. 1715.

[2] W.I.C. 917, Sevenhuysen and Council to X, 30 May 1701; Bosman, op. cit., p. 65.

[3] W.I.C. 124, W. Bosman to Director-General Sevenhuysen, 10 Mar. 1700.

[4] Bosman, op. cit., p. 66.

a basinful of gold together with some of the wives of the Asante king as tribute.[1] This provided an occasion for the Asante to assert their independence.

Like Denkyira, Asante had already established itself as master of many of its neighbouring states before it became known to the Europeans on the coast.[2] When it burst the boundaries of the states familiar to the Europeans, the foundations of a strong empire had been well and truly laid. By 1700 Asante, which was 'but lately known' to the coast, was reputed to 'possess more gold than Dinkira'.[3] There is no indication that when Barbot was on the coast in the 1680s Asante was known to the Europeans, for none of the companies recorded anything about it. Like most of the states which were in the interior, its identity was lost in what was commonly called the Akani state. Barbot's assertion that Inta and Asante were one appears to have been an afterthought. He was considering events after, and not before, the fall of Denkyira. Nor is Bosman's statement that all the neighbouring states feared Denkyira except 'Asiante and Akim who are yet stronger'[4] in accordance with the facts. The statement is an *ex post facto* assertion inapplicable to events that occurred before 1700. It was not until the defeat of Denkyira that Asante became known to the Europeans on the coast. Nevertheless it had long established itself as a strong power in the interior.

The foundation of a powerful Asante nation is associated with Osei Tutu. It is not known for certain when he became king of Asante. The most that can be said is that before he became king Asante was a small state composed of kinship groups which had moved northward from Adansi. As a result of the favourable economic position which the Akani confederacy had long enjoyed in both the northern and southern trade, the confederated states had witnessed a phenomenal growth in population and wealth. The overpopulation led to a scarcity of available land for cultivation. Political instability set in, and movements in all directions had started before and after the Adansi war with Denkyira in the 1650s. The movement to the north served a double purpose of satisfying both the political and economic needs of the migrants. Politically stronger and better-organized states to the east and south made it unwise to move in those directions.

[1] Claridge, op. cit. i. Ward, op. cit., p. 118; Rattray, *Ashanti*, p. 290.

[2] For more about the Asante struggles with the early Kwaman states see K. Y. Daaku, 'Pre-Ashanti States', *G.N.Q.* 9 (1966), 10–13.

[3] Bosman, op. cit., p. 69.

[4] Barbot, in Churchill, *Collections* ii. 189.

States like Twifo, Fante, and Akyem were likely to dispute any large mass movement of peoples. To the north, however, the Kwaman states, which were sparsely peopled, offered the line of least resistance. Settling first in the strategically secluded area of Asantemanso, they began to expand their power northwards. Economically the northward expansion gave the emigrants control over the important kola-growing districts, which afforded the most sought-after commodity in the north-eastern trade with the Hausa. The first phase of Asante territorial expansion was therefore directed to obtaining access to the valuable routes leading to Begho in the north-west and Gonja in the north-east.[1] It was in pursuit of the policy of northward expansion that Osei Tutu's uncle, Obiri Yeboa, the Kumasihene, lost his life, and Osei Tutu was recalled from exile and study in Akwamu to become king.

Of all the people called upon to build a nation on the Gold Coast in the seventeenth century, none appears to have been better prepared for the job of kingship than Osei Tutu. He combined the advantages of a courtly education with courage and level-headedness. When his affair with the niece of the Denkyira king forced him to escape from the Denkyira court, he continued his education at the court of Akwamu, another up-and-coming Akan state. Apart from the valuable personal experience he gained from his travels he must have been impressed by the use of firearms and might have been determined to emulate Akwamu and Denkyira on his return home. In addition to whatever experience he gained, he formed a lasting friendship with the famous Ɔkɔmfo Anɔkye, who was to become his adviser in the task of nation-building. Between them, Osei Tutu, the courageous and youthful king, and Ɔkɔmfo Anɔkye, the wise planner and 'the Cardinal Wolsey of Ashanti', laid the foundations of an empire that was to increase in power, fame, and wealth for nearly two centuries.

The two most important and lasting achievements ascribed to Osei Tutu and Ɔkɔmfo Anɔkye are the creation of a unified Asante nation and the assertion of Asante independence of Denkyira. Osei Tutu continued his uncle's war of territorial expansion into the Doma states to the north. He was then left with the problem of

[1] Wilks, 'The Northern Factor in Ashanti History', 'Begho and the Mande', *J.A.H.* II. i (1961); Boahen, 'The Two Faces of Ashanti', *T.H.S.G.* 6 (1963), 127; J. K. Fynn, 'The Rise of Ashanti', *G.N.Q.* 9 (1966), 24; K. Y. Daaku, 'Pre-Ashanti States', *G.N.Q.* 9 (1966), 11–13.

creating and maintaining a lasting and viable independent nation. The Denkyira war provided the cause for achieving both. The need to fight Denkyira served to bring all the nearby states into an Asante confederation. For the union to last, some external symbols were necessary which would be accepted by all. It was in this respect that the resources of Ɔkɔmfo Anɔkye, the priestly adviser of Osei Tutu, were brought into use. Tradition asserts that at a meeting of the Asante chiefs one Friday, Anɔkye caused a stool to descend from the heavens. Thereafter every one of the assembled rulers provided cuttings from his nails to be concocted into a 'medicine' for the consecration of the stool. This stool, which became known as the 'Golden Stool of Asante,' was then presented as the 'soul of the Asante nation'. The king of Kumasi was granted custody of it. In addition to his duties as the Kumasihene he became, by virtue of the Golden Stool, the head of the new nation whose external manifestation of unity was symbolized by the Golden Stool.[1]

Whatever the details of the tradition, its historical implications are clear. From about 1690 the states which had been associated with each other principally because of their common ancestry—mostly of the Oyoko clan—and for self-preservation became united into one nation. The new nation was given the allegiance hitherto owed to the individual states which had come together to form the union. Henceforth the most important single consideration was to fight for, and on behalf of, the Golden Stool. In about 1699 the new Asante nation had to put its unity and strength to test in the war against Denkyira.

Apart from the unity with which the Golden Stool provided the Asante, other external forces helped in the defeat of Denkyira. Most of the tributary states of Denkyira saw in the Asante war an opportunity to settle old scores with their exacting overlord. Like the Asante they all yearned for their independence. Tradition has it that Ntim Gyakari, king of Denkyira, sent a large brass basin to Kumasi and demanded that Osei Tutu and his elders fill it with gold.[2]

[1] Rattray, *Ashanti*, p. 290; Busia, *The Position of the Chiefs*, pp. 96–9; Ward, op. cit., pp. 117–19; Fage, *Ghana*, p. 54.

[2] Reindorf, op. cit., p. 55; Meyerowitz, *Akan Traditions*, p. 95; Ward, op. cit., p. 120; Bosman, op. cit., p. 65. Bosman gives what appears to have been the remote cause of the war. Bosiante (Boa Amponsem) of Denkyira was said to have misused one of the wives of Osei Tutu, when they were sent on a mission to Abankeseso, the Denkyira capital. The enraged Tutu therefore decided on a war against Denkyira.

The excessive demand might have been an attempt by Denkyira to force a show-down with its powerful tributary state, which was extending northwards and consolidating its power. At this time the power of Denkyira over some of its northern tributary states was on the wane. Adanse, for instance, had come under the influence of Asante.[1] Whatever the motives of Ntim Gyakari, he succeeded in precipitating a war with Osei Tutu, his tributary king. His tribute was refused and war ensued.

The theory that Denkyira did nothing to prevent Asante from accumulating arms oversimplifies the political situation and the forces which conspired to effect Denkyira's ruin. The Asante were said to have bought large quantities of gunpowder, 'which the Dinkiras suffered to pass uninterrupted through their country'.[2] The accounts of the European officials on the coast contradict the above statement. States like Twifo, Assin, Adom, and Wassa, which had been reduced to tributary status and had been ruined by Denkyira, considered it their master's turn to taste defeat. They even went further than just to wish. All trade routes from the countries into Denkyira were blockaded in order to prevent the flow of firearms to the court of their overlord.[3] Indeed some of the rulers of the tributary states were known to have actively participated in the war on the side of the Asante. Agyensam of Assin was known to have long been in Asante seeking to get the Asante king to fight Denkyira, which had deprived Assin of its independence in 1697.[4] Not only to the windward side but also in the neighbourhood of Accra the Akyem who were the allies of Denkyira, found it difficult to come by firearms. The result was that while Asante was in a better position to procure firearms through its numerous supporters and well-wishers, Denkyira, on the other hand, was left in short supply of the valuable weapons needed in the war. Thus disadvantageously placed and mostly deserted by its tributary states, Denkyira could not but suffer defeat in the face of overwhelming odds. When battle was joined, Asante defeated Denkyira at Feyiase. The victorious Asante carried the battle into the heart of Denkyira and plundered the country. Bosman computed Akyem losses alone at 30,000 men.[5]

[1] Reindorf, op. cit., pp. 55–6.
[2] Bosman, op. cit., p. 66.
[3] W.I.C. 917, N.B.K.G. 57, J. van Sevenhuysen to the X, 30 May 1701.
[4] Reindorf, op. cit., p. 57.
[5] Bosman, op. cit., p. 67; Reindorf, op. cit., p. 56.

In addition Akyem incurred the enmity of Asante, which was to cost it dearly in the eighteenth century.

Contrary to the common assertion that the Dutch provided considerable material help to Denkyira, one discovers that the Dutch were prepared to do anything to avoid becoming involved in the war. This was because experience had taught them that it would be impossible to get control over the whole trade on the Gold Coast. In the reports before and after the war, it is obvious that they were completely at a loss as to what course to take. They categorically asserted that 'they would steer clear of the troubles'. They would be neutral because they were uncertain of the outcome of the conflict. If the Denkyira became victorious, 'as they had always been', they forecast ruin for all the allied states; that would be the end of profitable trade. In the interest of trade, however, their sympathies went to the Asante, who were known to possess more and better gold than Denkyira. This covert support for the gold-rich Asante may be discerned from the Director-General's letter in 1701, which, in happy tones, reported the defeat of Denkyira. It is doubtful if they would have been so elated if they had offered any help to Denkyira. To derive the maximum benefit from the changed political situation, the Dutch quickly dispatched an emissary to the 'gevresde Asjantijnse Caboceer Zaay' with costly presents and messages of congratulations.[1] The Dutch move gained them a commercial advantage over their rivals. The English therefore made attempts to outshine them in showering gifts upon the king of Asante, who was described as the 'great governing man in these parts, whose friendship was worth preserving'.[2]

However, 1701 did not establish complete Asante control over the former tributary states of Denkyira. Despite this, the political effects of the 1701 war were still very far-reaching. It led to the revival of old and near-defunct alliances. It also created new groupings. A few of the alliances were initiated by the Europeans in order to ensure for themselves stability in trade; others were started by the Africans themselves; but all had one motivating force—namely the fear of Asante. Two instances may be cited to illustrate the first group of alliances. In 1700, when the wars in the interior had virtually

[1] W.I.C. 917, J. van Sevenhuysen to the X, 30 May, 16 Nov. 1701; N.B.K.G. 57, J. van Sevenhuysen to the X, 16 Nov. 1701; N.B.K.G. 233, Instructions to D. Van Nyendaal, 9 Oct. 1701.

[2] T70/26, Sir Dalby Thomas to R.A.C., 22 Oct. 1708.

halted trade, the Dutch quickly and successfully effected an agreement among some of the affected states. They gathered the rulers of Asebu, Fetu, Twifo, Akani, and Kabestera together to promise to grant free passage to traders going through their states. This was found necessary because, despite the drive which Asante had shown, its traders were finding it increasingly difficult to gain free access to the sea. Thus the agreement greatly benefited the Asante traders, who were appearing in large numbers on the coast.

In 1701, when the Dutch were already in direct contact with the Asante court, the English, their closest rivals, endeavoured to score a diplomatic victory over them. They invited representatives of Asebu and Fetu to Cape Coast 'to hold a palaver to have a firm alliance with the King of Ashantee'.[1] The English attempts bore good fruit, because it was being reported that traders from Asante were always appearing first at Cape Coast and other English forts before they left for the Dutch. The primary motive of the Europeans in seeking unity among the Africans was commercial; none the less, such alliances provided incidental political advantages. But since their stimuli were external and foreign they were not long in falling apart.

On the other hand, alliances effected through mutual desire for self-preservation between neighbouring states were much more beneficial and lasting. At one time or another practically all the states of the Gold Coast were involved in some form of grouping. The most significant ones were between Akyem and Denkyira, Akwamu and Asante, and Fante and Akwamu. The rise of Fante between 1700 and 1720 may be cited as far and away the most significant development on the coast. Before 1700 observers had deprecated the disunity in the Fante state, which had atrophied in its power both latent and real. They observed that if the Fante were to be united, the 'circumjacent countries could soon find their power by the interruptions into their territory'. It was also noted that the Fante possessed a debilitating tendency whereby 'a chief sometimes would scarce own the Braffo for his superior'. Such a practice impeded the unity of the state. However all agreed that Fante's military prowess was better developed than that of most of the states. In times of war it could marshall over 10,000 well-armed men.[2] At no time did the disunity become so pronounced as during

[1] N.B.K.G. 57, W.I.C. 917, J. van Sevenhuysen to the X, 25 July 1700. T70/377, Cape Coast Account Book, 17 Nov. 1701.

[2] Bosman, op. cit., p. 49; Barbot, op. cit., p. 175.

the period of the Dutch–Komenda war. Both the Dutch and the English exploited the factions in the Fante state. When the Dutch paid money to hire the Fante to fight for them, the Fante gladly allowed themselves to be bought off by the English. By 1706, however, the picture of a disunited Fante had undergone a change.

The main factor that made the Fante hasten to unite was the political change that was brought about by the Asante intrusion into the politics of the southern states. But it was no wonder that, of all the coastal states, Fante should become strong and powerful at the beginning of the eighteenth century. As far back as the 1640s, the Fante had pointed out that they would not grant control of their land to any European. Thus their state, especially Anomabo, became the haven for interlopers. They therefore benefited more than most of the coastal states where trade with interlopers was forbidden. Their wealth enhanced and increased their power, which also enabled them to stand up against the companies and to enforce laws on Africans and Europeans alike. Bosman pithily pointed out the exact relationship between the Fante and the Europeans as one in which the Dutch and the English had an equal power, 'that is, none at all'.[1] To other European visitors and writers the Fante proved as troublesome as they were headstrong. In the eighteenth century the Fante sank their differences and sought to extend their powers to embrace other states primarily to preserve their privileges against imminent Asante encroachment. Other weaker states were also ready to come into union with Fante. The first and firmest of such allies was Assin. Fante was ready to help fight those who threatened the independence of its ally. When in 1706 the Kabestera, Fetu, and Asebu states threatened an attack on Assin, Fante support was quickly lent the latter. This timely intervention saved Assin from utter defeat. The tables were turned on the allied forces, which were completely routed. The king of Asebu lost his life in the encounter, while Ahen Pompa of Fetu was captured by the Fante troops.[2]

The main consideration which drew Fante to Assin was political. In that state Fante found a buffer for defence against the Asante. But in spite of the need to preserve the independence of Assin, Fante was known to have provided lukewarm support in the initial stages. Placing immediate economic gains above ultimate political benefits, they first allowed the Asebu to capture a number of Assin

[1] T70/5/63, Sir Dalby Thomas to R.A.C., 21 Aug. 1709; Bosman, op. cit., p. 49.
[2] T70/5/40, Hayes, Chaigneau and Hicks to R.A.C., 23 Dec. 1706.

to be sold as slaves.[1] After three years, however, Fante came to realize that such half-hearted support of friends and allies was unlikely to further their interests. Small wonder then that from 1710 the Fante took the alliance seriously. After all, it would be to their mutual advantage if they, as powerful coastal middlemen, were to forge a lasting friendship with the Assin, who in all respects were their counterparts in the interior. Close co-operation would redound to each other's advantage, politically and commercially. With this aim in view, Fante fully and unreservedly supported the Assin in their troubles with Twifo. In the troubles between the two states, both sides turned to their allies for help. Whilst Twifo solicited help from the Dutch, with whom it had entered into a defensive and offensive alliance in 1690, Assin turned to Fante. Akafo, king of Twifo, requested a loan of £800 from the Dutch to enable it to engage help from Akyem, Denkyira, and Asante. The Dutch were embarrassed by the Twifo request. They realized that despite the obligations which the 1690 agreement placed on them, as well as the favourable geographic position of Twifo, they could not readily accede to the request. One reason was that they had learnt that it was not possible to recover such debts from the African states. But the weightier reason was the desire not to offend the Fante, who were friends of the Assin. If the Fante got wind of such help the Dutch were very likely to be turned out of their state. But the Dutch could not go back on the terms of their agreement with Twifo. They discovered a compromise solution likely to satisfy their friends. To prevent the deed from becoming known to the Fante, it was agreed that Twifo should provide sureties in property instead of in men, who would be easily noticed by Fante.[2] That the Europeans were unwilling to incur the displeasure of the Fante was due to the favourable and privileged political position which they enjoyed among the coastal states.

There was yet another instance during the struggle between Assin and Akyem in 1715 that clearly reflected the power of Fante. For a long time Akyem and the southern part of Akani (Assin) had been constantly at variance. This was due to the fact that Akyem 'pretended an overlordship over Acany'. In addition to their common

[1] T70/5/38, From Cape Coast to R.A.C., 24 Feb. 1704.

[2] W.I.C. 122/36, Agreement between N. Sweerts and Acafu, King of 't'Juffer, 16 Jan. 1690; W.I.C. 124, From Engelgraaf Robertz at Chama to N. Harring, 27 July 1713; W.I.C. 122/72, Agreement between E. Robertz and Akafo of Twifo, 30 July 1713.

boundary, the Akyem and Assin had rival interests, since both were long-distance traders who carried their goods far into the interior.[1] Each desired to monopolize this carrying trade, and so it became inevitable that their interests would collide. Their rivalry was further shown by the fact that at the turn of the century they opposed each other in the Asante–Denkyira war. The Assin fought for the Asante against the Akyem and the Denkyira. 1715 saw an open and direct conflict between the two states.

In April of that year the Assin fled their country to seek refuge with their men and women in Kabestera. The flight was followed by rumours of impending Akyem attacks. But before the truth of Akyem preparations for war could be established, the Fante had already thrown in their lot with Assin. At a meeting of the Fante chiefs at Abora, it was unanimously agreed to help Assin. There were two reasons for this. Firstly, they felt obliged on account of their long-standing friendship to offer help. Secondly, and much more importantly, the Fante believed that they would become the next target of the Akyem. The fear that their safety was at stake was further strengthened by the unfounded rumours that the Asante were openly helping Akyem.[2] One would expect the Assin to have readily accepted any support from the Fante. Far from it. They hesitated to trust themselves to their friends. Their reluctance stemmed from the double-facedness of the Fante in 1707, which had cost them dearly in men and prestige. The genuine fears which Fante had about the Akyem forced them to be earnest about their help to Assin. After several meetings and consultations, the Fante and Assin met at Abora and 'drank fetish' to stand faithfully by each other.

It was not only Fante that was scared by the impending Akyem attack of Assin. Fetu felt likewise. The king and elders of Fetu found it necessary to sink their differences and to consult with the Fante in their own defence. Thus the nucleus of a Fante confederacy came into being, with Abora as the confederacy headquarters. At a meeting in June 1715 between Ahen Domine of Fetu and the Fante chiefs, both sides agreed on a defensive alliance. That Assin and Fetu should turn to Fante is evidence of the power which the latter came to wield. Even better evidence of this is afforded by the action of

[1] Dapper, op. cit., p. 459; Barbot, op. cit., p. 189.

[2] N.B.K.G. 82, From Cormantine to Elmina, 19 Apr., 5 May, 12 July, 28 Sept. 1715. The allegation that the Asante were supporting Akyem is difficult to substantiate. In all probability it was merely meant to whip up support for the Fante cause, since Asante and Akyem were preparing for war at the time.

Akyem itself. Like the other states, Akyem felt the friendship or the neutrality of the Fante essential for its own cause. Therefore an embassy from Akyem also arrived at Abora to ask the assembled Fante rulers to refrain from supporting the Assin. Akyem assured Fante that the struggle would not be carried into its territory. But the assurances were unavailing. Fante would not be so easily put off when its power was now keenly competed for. After recounting its long and close association with the Assin, the council at Abora warned Akyem that it would consider an attack on Assin as an unfriendly act, and would consequently do everything to repulse it.[1] The warning had the desired effect, since the threats of Akyem attacks never materialized.

Already Fante influence had reached eastwards to Agona and even beyond, to Akwamu. In the struggle against Assin the Akyem tried to enlist the support of Agona. Promises of presents and help against Akwamu by Akyem did not convince the Agona. They would not support Akyem because, as they pointed out, they already had a long-standing friendly relationship with Fante in which they had even sent their prince to Abora as a hostage. In need of allies in the struggle against Assin, and partly aware that the Fante were in league with their great rival, Akwamu, and perhaps because of an impending war with Asante in 1715, the Akyem allowed the projected attack on Assin to peter out. Nevertheless, the alliances that were forged as a result of, and during the period of, the struggle clearly indicate the changed nature of warfare and politics on the Gold Coast in the second decade of the eighteenth century. Henceforth attacks on one state involved many others, who came to the assistance of their allies in the expectation that similar help would be given when and if it was needed. The need for helpful and powerful allies among the local states did not go unnoticed by the European writers. Although if neither side had been helped by allies, it was known that Akyem would easily have defeated Assin, the part played by allies changed matters. The contemporary writers were sceptical of the outcome if Akyem fought alone. They wondered how, with such an array of help for Assin from Fante, Fetu, Akron (Gomua), Agona, and Akwamu, the Akyem, who only had Adom and Kabestera for allies, would be able to stand up against their enemies.[2] Luckily for Akyem no battle was fought.

[1] N.B.K.G. 82, Letter from Cormantine to Elmina, 28 Sept. 1715.
[2] Idem, From d'Outreau to Elmina, 5 Nov. 1715.

That Akwamu should come to the assistance of Assin against Akyem was significant. It may be said that it was because of Akwamu threats on its eastern borders that Akyem never attacked Assin and its allies. For a long time relations between Akyem and Akwamu had been those of constant struggle for power punctuated by periods of uneasy truce. Their rivalry dates back to the early period of Akwamu expansion. Akyem resented the present of a powerful Akwamu on its eastern border. It therefore did all it could to thwart the efforts of Akwamu in its empire-building. In 1659, for instance, Akyem fought on the side of Accra against Akwamu.[1] Traditionally therefore Akyem and Akwamu were rivals. It was due to the dominance of the powerful and numerically strong Akyem on its western borders that Akwamu directed its search for an empire to the east and north-east. With such a history of struggles behind them, both sides eagerly awaited the slightest favourable opportunity to embarrass the other. Such chances occurred whenever one side was at war with another state. To win the support of the rival's enemies would naturally increase one's own fighting force. In the 1680s it was Akwamu intervention and threats that prevented an Akyem alliance with Agona. To eliminate threats from the Akyem and to be assured of Agona help, Akwamu reduced Agona to dependent status.[2] The reduction of Agona by Akwamu made it difficult, if not impossible, for the Akyem to obtain firearms from the Europeans at Winneba. It is not unlikely that the cordial relationship that long existed between Akwamu and Asante was seen primarily by the former as a protection against Akyem. Had the Akyem and Asante come together, Akwamu would surely have been ruined. Without doubt the Asante alliance safeguarded Akwamu's north-western frontiers from any sudden Akyem attack. What was more, the wars between Akyem and Asante diverted Akyem from any serious attacks on Akwamu. By winning over Agona, Akwamu succeeded in practically sealing off any contact by the Akyem with the coastline between Winneba and the Volta. Akyem merchants could only trade at the sufferance of Akwamu.

Akwamu's policy towards the gold-rich Akyem naturally irritated the Europeans. To the latter, it was essential and beneficial to have direct contact with the Akyem. It was with such an aim in view that

[1] O.W.I.C. 13, Valckenburg's Manuscript from G.C. to XIX, 1659.

[2] Wilks, 'The Rise of the Akwamu Empire, 1650–1710', *T.H.S.G.* 3. ii (1957), 102–32; Bosman, op. cit., p. 61.

in 1703 the Dutch contracted to supply arms and men to Akwamu in return for a free passage for inland traders to the coast. While the Akwamu very much wanted the Europeans to adhere to their part of the terms of the agreement, they themselves were reluctant to honour their part of it. If all inland traders were given easy and free access to the coast, the middlemen's share of profits would no longer come to Akwamu. They would be diverted into the hands of the traders from the other states. Nor did they even respect the clause which asked Akwamu to refrain from wars likely to disrupt trade. Though peace would encourage profitable trade in gold and ivory, it was inimical to Akwamu's political ambitions. Akwamu continued its struggle with Akyem, and even added Kwawu and other states to its expanding empire. Two years after the agreement of 1703, Sir Dalby Thomas, with his characteristic impetuosity, became so exasperated by the behaviour of the Akwamu that he expressed the desire to find a suitable means to 'bring the Akyem on the young hairbrained king of Akwamu'. Such a measure would bring peace and tranquillity; and also would be the 'best thing done on this coast for several years'.[1] But it was only four years later that the Akyem made any serious preparations against Akwamu. Since Akwamu at this time was suspected to be favouring the Dutch, the English grew enthusiastic about the imminent Akwamu–Akyem war. They optimistically expressed the hope that the Akwamu king 'would soon be humbled'.[2] The hope was misplaced. An Akyem defeat of Akwamu was to be delayed for another twenty years.

In the meantime, each state looked for an opportunity to humble the other. After 1700 Akwamu needed to be much more vigilant against any attacks from Akyem for this was now fast becoming a united state. Like all the other states that had grown conscious of their own safety and their capacity for a successful united endeavour, Akyem came to realize that its interests would be better served if its various sections could all come together. In the seventeenth century the Akyem, like the Fante, had been riddled by internal strife. Barbot in the 1680s had noted several changes and revolutions in their government '. . . [which] render it less formidable to its neighbours'. Bosman confirmed this observation. He diagnosed the cause of Akyem troubles as Akwamu's clever exploitation of the factions in the state. As long as Akyem remained disunited and weak, it

[1] T70/1184/4, Abstract of Letters from Cape Coast to R.A.C., 1 Jan. 1705.
[2] T70/5/63, Abstract of Letters to R.A.C., 22 Oct. 1709, 30 Jan. 1710.

posed no great threat to the rapidly expanding Akwamu empire. Thus the kings of Akwamu employed 'fair words and presents to sow Dissension betwixt the governing men of Akim'.[1] The most significant development in Akyem at the beginning of the eighteenth century was the removal of the bad blood that had long existed between the 'governing men'. And this was resented by Akwamu. The two Akyem kings, Ofosuhene Apenten of Kotoku and Ofori (presumably Ofori Panin) of Abuakwa, sank their differences and pooled their forces against Akwamu. Strengthened by their unity, the two kings planned a joint assault on Akwamu and Agona in 1715. Such a war, if successful, would remove the economic strictures that Akwamu's restrictive practices had brought on Akyem traders. Akyem became determined as never before to forge a direct contact with the Europeans on the coast. Obviously unaware of the background diplomatic discussions and schemings, and understandably ignorant of the kingship ties between the two Akyem states, the Dutch, who had long known the Akyem as a divided people, expressed great surprise at the news of the union. It is not known for certain whether it was because of, or despite, the union between the two states of Abuakwa and Kotoku that Apenten of Akyem Kotoku decided to sever his relations with the king of Akwamu. The most that can be said is that the Kotoku king was reported to have provoked the Akwamu into war by sending back his wife, the Akwamuhene's daughter, to her father.[2] The affront provoked the Akwamu to prepare an attack on Akyem. Before matters could be brought to a head, however, more serious developments to the north had forced the Akyem to seek a truce with Akwamu and Agona. Asante armies were getting ready for Akyem.

The first open breach between Akyem and Asante was in 1701. In that year Akyem supported Denkyira against Asante. The war was costly in lives for Akyem and earned her the unforgiving displeasure of the Asante. What was more, Akyem's alliance with Denkyira nearly upset the political calculations of the Asante when, soon after the Denkyira war, a joint action by the defeated states reversed the verdict of battle and temporarily defeated the Asante

[1] Barbot, op. cit., p. 189; Bosman, op. cit., p. 69. Bosman asserted that Akyem pretended to a feudal right over Akwamu, and demanded an annual tribute. Although Wilks does not accept Bosman's claim, it substantiates the traditional view expressed by Reindorf that Ansa Sasraku of Akwamu settled first in an Akyem country after he had been driven away by the Denkyira. Asamankese, the first Akwamu capital, is in Akyem Abuakwa.

[2] N.B.K.G. 82, From D'Outreau at Apam to Elmina, 5 Nov. 1715.

forces.[1] The fear of a joint attack on Akwamu rose high, but it never materialized. Eventually the Asante subjugated Akyem and imposed a heavy fine on it. The fine was ignored. The Akyem then began to molest Asante traders who passed through their country to the coast. These petty annoyances made another Asante attack on Akyem inevitable. Luckily for Akyem, Asante relations with Akwamu were deteriorating. Akwamu began to resent Asante interference in its politics. Asante flirtations with Agona provoked Akwamu against her. The Agona obviously resented their subordinate role in their relations with Akwamu. They therefore looked to Asante to help them retrieve their independence. Akwamu was displeased by the overt encouragement which Asante gave to its vassal state. Smarting under a national insult, Akwamu temporarily relaxed its policy of economic control over Akyem, possibly to force a show-down with Asante. In December 1715 Akwamu agreed, in return for the sum of £1,600, to allow Akyem traders direct contact with the Europeans at Accra. For ten months the Akyem were able to purchase firearms from the forts for their war against Asante. In one instance 200 Akyem traders who arrived at Accra demanded nothing but firearms. They made no bones about the fact that the firearms were needed to fight the Asante.[2]

Before long, however, the uneasy truce between Akyem and Akwamu had ended. Akwamu once again began troop movements against Akyem. In March 1716 troops from Fante, Assin, and Akwamu converged on Agona ready to launch an attack on Akyem. As was to be expected, the troop movements and the war scare disrupted normal trade. But since the European traders were expecting rich yields of slaves out of the war they waxed enthusiastic about it. Side by side with the immediate economic profits that were expected, it was believed that the Akyem would be able to defeat the Akwamu, whose policies in relation to the inland states tended to stifle profitable trade.[3] The European expectations of an Akwamu defeat were strengthened by the attitude of the Ga, who were one of its tributary states. They refused to assist the Akwamu in the impending war. The Dutch were also reluctant to honour their 1703 agreement with Akwamu, and refused to lend them any support

[1] Furley Collections, Christiansborg Journal, Dutch and other European records, 1699–1715; May 1702.

[2] N.B.K.G. 82, J. van Dijk to Elmina, 10 and 13 Oct., 31 Dec. 1715; M. Priestley and I. Wilks, 'Ashanti Kings', *J.A.H.* 1 (1960) p. 88.

[3] T70/6/135, Phipps and Bleau to R.A.C., 30 Mar. 1716.

either in men or munitions. They even equivocated in granting the Akwamu king's request to release Amo, an Akwamu prince who was then a broker in their service, to fight for the king. Even Amo's willingness to help Akwamu was dampened by Dutch threats to hand him over to the Akyem in the event of an Akwamu defeat.[1] After an indecisive battle the Akyem beat an ignominious retreat, to the intense disappointment of all their friends and well-wishers, especially the English. The flight of the powerful Akyem led to a number of speculations in trading circles.

The first explanation adduced for the Akyem withdrawal was that the rainy season was ill suited for warfare. It was held that those needed to bear arms also had to cultivate the fields. They therefore had to abandon their war designs in order to take advantage of the rains to work on their farms.[2] This might well have been partly true. But the main reason for the sudden departure, as Baillie saw from far-away Komenda, was an Asante war which was threatening. Baillie had long suspected the reason for the inordinate desire for firearms by the Asante merchants. His inquiries about their probable target yielded no results, because the Asante maintained strict secrecy. When he got to know that similar demands were made by the Akyem on the leeward coast, especially at Accra, he concluded that an Akyem–Asante war was imminent.[3] His interpretation received corroborative evidence from other sources. Butler, the Dutch chief factor at Axim, also had the impression that the sudden departure of Asante and Wassa troops supposed to have been sent to punish John Konny of Ahanta was due to the need to have the full strength of the Asante fighting forces available for an impending war with Akyem.[4] The fear of the Asante, and the need to have provisions, compelled the Akyem to drop the attack on Akwamu for the time being. Although the Asante did not strike before 1717, sending the men back home provided a double advantage. They worked to ensure a regular supply of food, while at the same time they made themselves readily available to defend the state in an emergency. Despite the fact that the war was two years off, skirmishes arising from the molestation of Asante traders became rampant. In 1716, for instance,

[1] N.B.K.G. 82, From Boehaven at Breku to Elmina, 10 Mar. 1716; From J. Dyke at Accra to Elmina, 13 Mar. 1716.

[2] N.B.K.G. 82, From Hendricks at Apam to Elmina, 6 and 10 Apr. 1716.

[3] T70/1464, Komenda Diary, 27 Apr. 1715.

[4] N.B.K.G. 82, From Butler to H. Harring, 13 Dec. 1715; Director-General's report, 15 Dec. 1715.

Asante traders passing through Akyem were intercepted and their goods seized. Preparations for war on both sides were therefore stepped up. The Europeans noted early in 1717 that the 'Ashantis and Akims are resolved on a war with each other'.[1] In October 1717 the Akyem inflicted on Asante the greatest disaster in its history. Covertly assisted by the Akwamu, who, as has been pointed out, resented the two-facedness of the Asante towards them, the Akyem ambushed and killed (? Osei Tutu) the king of Asante.[2]

The Asante drive to the south after the Denkyira war was not only against Akyem. From 1701 Asante was committed on several fronts. Some of the wars appear to have been purely punitive attacks on Denkyira's supporters in the 1701 war. A few were waged to secure free passage for Asante merchants; others were in pursuit of a policy of outright expansion. The expansionist wars were first directed against states further away from the coast and thus did not greatly disturb the pattern of trade, but the punitive ones did. Of the punitive wars the one against the Aowin in 1715 was the most significant. In October 1715 rumours became current on the coast that the Asante had been defeated by the Aowin. The Asante–Aowin war was the outcome of a long struggle by the Asante to control the gold and cloth-rich states to the west and north-west. After the Denkyira defeat the Asante turned their attention to securing control over the routes which led to the Mande market at Kong. In August 1715, for instance, it was reported that the Asante had captured several slaves in their war against 'Gingebra [? Genejene, Gonja], a country beyond Ashantee'. Another report held that a large contingent of Asante troops had been sent to a country between Asante and Aowin and had destroyed the capital, Affindie Coco[3] (Ahwene Koko, the first traditional capital of Wenchi). After the fall of Ahwene Koko a number of Asante soldiers were said to have defected with their booty to Aowin.

[1] T70/6/48, Phipps to R.A.C., 6 Feb. (f. 53), 25 Sept. 1717; T70/6/75, Johnston to R.A.C., 26 May 1718.

[2] N.B.K.G. 84, Letter from Accra to Elmina, 30 Oct. 1717; Report of Director-General and Council, 4 Mar. 1718; Priestley and Wilks, op. cit., pp. 88–90. They assert that it was not the popular Osei Tutu, but an unknown Asante king who was killed.

[3] T70/1464, Report from Baillie at Komenda, 4 Aug. 1715; N.B.K.G. 82, Report from Butler at Axim, 10 Oct. 1715; Paul Ozanne, 'Ahwene Koko: Seventeenth-Century Wenchi', *G.N.Q.* 8 (1966), 18; K. Y. Daaku, 'The Fall of Ahwene Koko and its significance in Asante History', *G.N.Q.* 10 (1968).

Such defections could not be tolerated in the Asante army, and those who tried it were instantly hunted and punished. By providing protection for the group, the Aowin were wittingly courting Asante displeasure and openly inviting an invasion. Even if the defection of the Asante into the state had not occurred to provide an immediate cause for an attack, it would not have been long before the Asante invaded Aowin. Since 1701 Aowin had served as a refugee centre for many of those who escaped from the states that were being brought under the Asante hegemony. People from Denkyira, Wankyi, and Sefwi had been readily welcomed in Aowin.[1] The attack which the Asante, under their great general Amankwa Tia, launched in 1715 was therefore to serve a double purpose: first, to punish Aowin for its unfriendly acts towards Asante; secondly, and more importantly, to recapture the Asante refugees. Ever conscious of the threat of an Asante invasion, the Aowin had prepared for such an eventuality. They increased their number of firearms. European traders who arrived on the windward coast found all their guns readily bought by the Aowin. The Aowin were therefore able to provide stiff opposition to the Asante. After initial reverses and great losses, the Asante–Wassa army had to be reinforced by the Twifo before they were able to defeat the Aowin in November 1715. The state was plundered and a heavy fine of £2,000 and several slaves imposed on the rulers.[2]

The defeat of Aowin was not the end of the Asante drive to the south-west. They would not be stopped until nothing divided them from the sea. They found an excuse to attack the Nzema at Cape Apolonia, accusing them of having supplied firearms to the Aowin. The advance of the Asante soldiers led the people to desert Apolonia and to flee to Assini. For the first time in Asante history its army gazed on the sea. Not only Apolonia, but all the windward coast

[1] N.B.K.G. 82, From Butler to Director-General and Council, 10 and 11 Oct. 1715. Butler gives another interesting account of the reasons for the Asante–Aowin war. He asserts that there was a succession dispute in Asante after the death of the king and that the rival claimants undertook the war to decide the issue. The vanquished party was to rule in Aowin.

For more about the flight of people into Aowin and Nzima see Reindorf, op. cit., p. 56; Ackah, 'Kaku Ackah and the split of Nzema', (M.A. thesis, Legon, 1965).

[2] N.B.K.G. 82, Axim, Butler to Elmina, 5 and 27 Nov. 1715; N.B.K.G. 82, Komenda, Landman to Elmina, 12 and 28 Oct. 1715. In Sept. 1715 Blenke reported from Sekondi that 'Zaay had asked Akaffo of Twifu to be ready to join the war with Awawin'. T70/1464, Komenda Diary, 13 Oct. 1715.

between Axim and Cape Palmas was thrown into turmoil. Each state stood in great fear, ignorant of where and when the Asante would strike again. What was more, rumours of an Asante onslaught on that coast were given credence when, after the Aowin war, a contingent of General Amankwa Tia's army camped at Egyira, ostensibly to punish John Konny of Ahanta.[1] Luckily for the states the Akyem threats to Asante, among other things, hurried Amankwa Tia and his men back home.

In spite of the withdrawal of the Asante the scare persisted. Preparations to put defences in order continued. Trade was reduced to the barest minimum. What was more, the need of defence made it difficult for people to be recruited for other things. Men were reluctant to be drawn out of their own state. This the Dutch experienced to their intense disappointment. They were unable to obtain local help in their war against Konny in 1718. Preoccupation with self-defence was soon to be justified. The Asante came down again in 1721. When Atkins was at Assini in that year he met the Apolonians who had been driven away getting ready to attack John Konny, whom they blamed for bringing down the Asante against them.[2] Thus by 1721 Asante influence and power had been felt on the western coast of the Gold Coast. In later years the Asante drive was towards the central and the eastern parts of the country. It should, however, be pointed out that the Asante drive to the coast in the early eighteenth century was for commercial rather than political reasons; they made no efforts to incorporate such regions into their empire either as provinces or as mere tribute-paying outposts. If anything, all they wanted was direct trade with the Europeans.

The first two decades of the eighteenth century were for the newly created Asante nation a period of wars. To be able to pursue its policies successfully it needed a direct and uninterrupted contact with the coast, whence the European goods, especially firearms, could be readily obtained. It must be noted, however, that the young nation could hardly engage itself in actual fighting on many fronts all the time. More often than not it needed to use its influence and the fear that its armies had created for itself. It had at times to rely on the goodwill of its neighbours and some of its tributary states, like

[1] N.B.K.G. 82, From Axim to Elmina, 9, 11, and 12 Dec. 1715; 8 Mar. 1716; T70/1464, From Komenda to Cape Coast, Jan. 1716.

[2] N.B.K.G. 82, From Butler to Elmina, 12 Dec. 1715; Atkins, 'Voyages and Travels', Astley, *Collections* ii. 554.

Wassa. Luckily for Asante the Europeans on the coast were more than anxious to cultivate its goodwill. This is clearly shown by the haste and urgency with which both the Dutch and the English tried to win the Asante king's friendship when he defeated Denkyira. Without the support of some of the Europeans on the coast, the Asante did not want to advance to the south. When Kwamina Coffee of Kabestera provoked them by blocking the passage to Cape Coast, Osei Tutu sought permission from Sir Dalby Thomas to bring his men against him.[1] When the General equivocated in his reply, nothing was done by the Asante. John Kabes of Komenda, for instance, was known to have acted in a rather provocative manner towards the Asante. On one occasion he seized a present of Aggrey beads that the Dutch had intended for the king. He kept them for two years and released them of his own accord. When in 1715 Kabes picked a quarrel with the Twifo that prevented the Asante traders from coming to Komenda, it was his respect for the king, and not the fear of his power, that led him to settle the dispute.

The success of the Asante in the early eighteenth century depended in considerable measure on the friendship of the influential African merchants on the coast, who saw their destinies inextricably interwoven with the fate of Asante. In spite of the fact that the Asante king's capital was located miles away from the coast, such traders took pride in any friendship they were able to forge with the kings. Although Agent Baillie would not believe in Kabes's vaunted friendship with the king, there was much point in the existence of an alliance of some sort. That the Asante traders should always come first to Kabes before going to the Europeans, the instance of the mysterious present in the form of a three-horned sheep which Kabes made to the king in 1715, and even more the possibility that Kabes supplied the Asante with guns at a reduced price, all this made such an alliance reciprocally beneficial. Another such ally and faithful friend was Konny of Ahanta, who was known to have sent masons and bricklayers to the Asante king and even to have spent part of his last days in Kumasi.[2]

The latter part of the seventeenth and the first twenty years of the eighteenth centuries may, in sum, be described as a period of great

[1] T70/5/35, Sept. 1708, T70/70/29, Sir Dalby Thomas to R.A.C., 29 Dec. 1709.

[2] N.B.K.G. 82, From Axim to Elmina, 14 and 24 Jan., 8 Mar. 1718; T70/5/66, Sir Dalby Thomas to R.A.C., 12 Feb. 1709.

political developments on the Gold Coast. They witnessed the rise and, in some instances, the fall of larger states and empires such as Akwamu, Denkyira, and Asante. These rose from utter obscurity to become great imperial powers. They set the pace for development in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which was brought to a halt by the expansion of European imperialism into Africa. Denkyira and Akwamu were the pace-setters for the great Asante empire. But while, before 1701, Denkyira had been the most important state, which the competing European powers sought after, by 1709 it had lost its importance. Its genuine efforts to encourage free movement between the coast and the inland states were uncharitably and summarily dismissed as a mere 'brag . . . on purpose to draw us [the English] to trust them'.[1] At the same time the English were recommending such assorted presents as 'a plumed helmet, a field bed, scarlet and blue embroidered cloths to the kings of Asante and Akwamu'.

The breakthrough that Asante made into the politics of the southern states of the Gold Coast greatly upset the political equilibrium of the whole of the country. As with the growth of Denkyira and Akwamu, it was the unprecedented supply of arms brought to the coast by the European traders that hastened the growth of the Asante state. The introduction of European norms and the means to acquire them worked against the old political and social order based on kinship lines. The demand for slaves on the one hand, and, on the other, the desire for the newly introduced European consumer goods, made wars, raids, and counter-raids the order of the day. This led to the growth of large-scale empires. Larger groupings were necessary both for self-defence and also to derive the maximum benefits from the changed conditions. Weaker states found it politically wise to ally themselves with larger and stronger ones to avoid outright forceful incorporation. Through diplomacy, therefore, a state like Fante grew powerful, and came to dominate affairs on the central coastline and in its immediate hinterland. Fante became the principal partner in the confederacy of states comprising Fetu, Fante, Agona, and Assin. Its power was tacitly accepted by such a powerful state as Akwamu. The latter felt it necessary to ally itself with Fante to ensure that the Fante–Agona co-operation would never be used against Akwamu on its western border. But, even more, it was to prevent a *rapprochement* between Fante and Akyem,

[1] T70/26, Cape Coast Castle Accounts, Jan. 1707, 22 Oct. 1708.

which would have posed a great threat to Akwamu. Indeed, Akwamu sought and to some extent obtained a diplomatic isolation of Akyem. It allied itself with the powerful state of Asante to the north of Akyem. Thus assured of no troubles on its western border, Akwamu was able to pursue its policy of expansion to as far east as Whydah. However formidable the Akyem alliance with Denkyira might have been in the 1680s and the early 1690s, it became for all practical purposes, a spent force after 1701. Although it was able to defeat Asante in 1702 and caused consternation and panic at the courts of Akwamu and Asante, the alliance did not bear any fruitful results in the early eighteenth century.

As with many such political alliances, things began to fall apart. Cracks in the Asante–Akwamu alliance in 1717 and 1732 proved disastrous for both. In 1717 the Asante suffered a national disaster when their king was killed by the Akyem. And Asante's tacit support of Akyem ended in the fall of the Akwamu empire. Asante relations with some of its tributary states deteriorated. Wassa, the gold-rich country, became restive in the frequent wars it had to fight on Asante's behalf. What was more, powerful Asante was able to impose itself on Wassa. In 1716, for instance, when the Asante withdrew their support of the Wassa in their struggle with John Konny of Ahanta, the Wassa had to call off their projected attack on Pokoso. The relations between the two states continued to deteriorate in the course of time. This culminated in the incident of 1726 when Ntiforo, king of Wassa, was forced to flee his country and take protection with the English—an incident which led to two days of fighting between the Asante and the English.[1] The behaviour of Wassa was not an isolated instance. Asante had to fight many wars in the course of its history to extend and to preserve its empire. The history of the Gold Coast in the eighteenth century therefore may conveniently be viewed in terms of the activities of the Asante and their neighbours.

[1] T70/7/122, Franklin and Ross to R.A.C., 6 May 1726; T70/7/170, From Cape Coast Castle to R.A.C., 30 Nov. 1730. For the circumstances leading to the Akyem–Akwamu war and the fall of the Akwamu empire see Wilks, 'Akwamu' (M.A. thesis, Cardiff, 1958).

# APPENDIX I

## Map of the Regions of the Gold Coast in Guinea Coast

(25 DECEMBER 1629)[1]

ATCHIN is the place where the Portuguese have a little castle with three villages nearby. They are great fishers.

LITTLE INCASSA: these sow and mow—but (they) fish also mostly oystershell from a river, of which they burn great heaps of lime and bring that for sale at Atchy, (whose devoted they are) to whom they are devoted, and from whom they have learnt how to burn lime, but at Atchyn itself most lime is burnt for the maintenance of both her (Portugal's) castles at Atchyn and El Myna.

IGWYRA is rich in gold, here the Portuguese used to have a little stronghold, where they traded, and brought their trade (goods) up the little river in canoes but now that our nation has so strongly started to trade along that coast and the blacks could get the goods more cheaply than from them (they) have abandoned it, and have brought their force together on the beach. I am informed, and (I) believe it also to be true, that the gold that comes from Atchyn and Abeny, 15 miles west of Cape Three Points, is all from Igwyra.

Down to LITTLE COMENDO there live on the coast two citizens who both have been with a little trade goods in this country—they returned rich, but there is some danger of highwaymen on their way. Little is said about great INKASSA than that (they come sometimes passing through Adom) sometimes sell some gold to us at Little Commendo, principally when there is on the Gold Coast, say Quaqua coast, no ship before Assinie or Abeny.

INCASSA IGGWYRA is little (known?)

ANTA is ruled like a republic, and has no King. They are mostly always at war against those of Adom who (fall them stiff) attack them on the beach, being fishers, and inland they mow and sow. They (bring) also some gold (off) that those of Igwyra deliver and Mompa can bring them but (being) at war this hinders much. At Myna the Portuguese have a small redoubt and they receive there the fish-toll as also at Saconde. Then their neigh-

[1] Luepen, *Collections*, No. 743 . . . 25 Dec. 1629; K. Y. Daaku and A. van Dantzig, 'An Annotated Dutch Map of 1629', *G.N.Q.* 9 (1966).

bours have called them to their help some years ago against the other Ahantas by whom they were much plagued. Taccorary is the main village of the Ahantas on the coast.

JABEU is a little country with a town on its own, coming down the river, men, women and children trade with the Portuguese in Cama in fowls, millet and other goods, which they send to Myna.

ADOM. This people come often with their neighbours to the coast (bringing) gold, in order to spend it amongst us, at Little Comenda, as the road through Anta is now not free because of the war.

MAMPA. These trade amongst those of Adom and Anta inland.

WASSA has the fame amongst the blacks of being extraordinarily rich in gold, such that the inhabitants nearly always therein work and dig, so little, are well fed by their neighbours, they say also that the country is not so very fertile, those of Adom come mostly with the gold of their people to the coast.

WANQUIE has beautiful cloths, also gold, (they) trade inland with the Acanists.

GUAFFO or Great Comendo has another language than those of Anta, they are also a free people. In the old days Commendo, Futu and Saboe used to be under one King and let themselves be called, as still now amongst the foreigners Adesyners, like those of Fantyn, Fantyners, but is now divided into those three, who live on the coast. They are courageous fishers, sow and mow inland, have a great town, which they call after their country Guaffo, where lives their king, there are many people and bring many victuals to Myna for fish and gold sometimes the road is also closed because of a quarrel. Their main village on the coast is Aijtaquie. (The people are our great friends, generally one of our ships lies there, and trades with them, (they) have several times been burnt by those of Elmina who came to visit them over water in canoes, as they would otherwise be surrounded by those of Guaffo. Those of Ambremboe have once warred against this country at which battle they killed their King.

FUTU is a Kingdom separated from Comendo. They hold themselves neutral between us and Elmina, but are friends of the Portuguese. Their main-village on the coast is Cabo Cors; they are fishers; the Futus come to buy their fish in exchange for victuals and gold. Feed Elmina still more than those of Comendo, are also much submitted to Abramboe.

MYNA is the greatest Portuguese castle, called St. Jorge da Myna, the village which lies thereby is big and very populous. In the old days one half used to be under great Comando, the other under Futu, who came there to collect their contribution, but that subjection has been annulled a few years ago by some Portuguese Governadors, so that they live now as a

republic on their own and are mostly governed by the Portuguese Governador. Not only are there several chiefs of blacks as Mayors, the village is also divided into three, each part has its captain. They are brave fishermen, greatly outnumbering all their neighbours both in canoes and people. Engage in polishing beads which the Portuguese bring there, and which they sell back. They are '?alschaek' christians and marry some to the Portuguese.

MOURE: there lies our fort Nassau and a rather good village where the inhabitants are still submitted to those of Saboe (to pay some contribution), but war together with all our subjects against those of Elmina and her allies. They are mostly fishermen but they dare not to go deep into the sea because of the power of Elmina. Those of Saboe come to feed them, in exchange of fish. They even sow and mow and they also have their own captain and Caboceers.

Many work in order to serve as brokers for those who come to buy some goods from us, with which they make good profits, there is now because of our trade much intercourse of foreign people, from inland along the coast, so that apparently (provided that the trade continues here) this place will much increase its population. *Saboe* is a small kingdom but they consider themselves brave warriors, which they are indeed because those of Aty have come to visit them thrice with many thousands, and they have withstood them bravely, and chopped off the heads of several hundreds which they (as our principal countrymen) came to show us at our factory at Moure. And those sixty or seventy muskets which they borrowed from us have much helped, as some of them know very well how to use them, and also two small field guns (cannon?) which have been lent for their assistance. The country around here is very fertile for victuals.

So as it happens to be here the King and the inhabitants are very devoted to us.

ABRAMBOE is by itself populous; busy themselves with agriculture, but come every week to Moure to sell some gold in exchange for draperies and linen, but principally iron.

Some live also at Moure, who help the newly arrived trader in negotiating with us.

They are good warriors. They are not good friends of the Akanists, as they have warred with them ten or eleven years ago, many of them have been defeated, and most of (all) their villages have been burnt, after this they have agreed so that they are friends now (Schaat?) been by force little is said about this.

# APPENDIX II

## Deed of Cession made by the People of FANTYN, as Braffo was one AMBRO, of their beach, for the profit of the General Chartered Company 1 March 1624

As the General Amersfoort and his Council have found it good, seeing that the King of Sabou is not powerful (enough) to open the trade paths, after they have been deserted by the traders and his subjects, among whom Moure (as mother place of our fort Nassau) is chiefly included; and people of Cormantine have informed us of their friendship (which they have constantly maintained) so it is that they have unanimously decided and agreed to treat with the King of FANTYN and his people, as above in the manner following:

The King promises to remain annexed to us, that we trading at his ports, to make all our enemies his own (among whom are chiefly included those of DELMINA, the Portuguese) and at the opportunity, to cause them and theirs every injury, that they may be able to effect with their utmost strength; both on shore with the arms necessary thereto, and at sea with canoes provided with thirteen rowers and properly equipped. In which he and his people bind themselves, on a signal fixed upon us, such as by firing a heavy gun at night, or some other sufficient signal by day, to cut off, and if necessary, at any opportunity to help to fight all foreign traders, from whatsoever quarter the sound might come; unless they are openly licensed by the General and his Council, who reside here on behalf of their High Mightinesses the States General of the United Netherlands, His Princely Excellency, and the Chartered West India Company.

Thus Done by the General and his Council (with consent of the Black Party) on the ship Mauritius, Ao. 1624, Ulto March, before Cormantijn.

This I acknowledge and authorise my signature on my behalf (not being able to be present) and give token thereof by oath, and swearing to our Gods. In default of this not being wholly observed by me and my people, as it ought, the General and his Council may with every reason abandon my ports for all time.

Mark of the X King of Fanti.
CUAGUO

V.W.I.S. 1162, p. 519.
Abo Baffo, King of Fantyn, Cormantijn, and Annemabo.

# APPENDIX III

## Act of Cession and Transfer of the District JUMORE, made by the owners and possessors of the said country to the General Chartered West India Company, 16 January 1657

[V.W.I.S. 1162, 306–B12, O.W.I.C. 12]

WE MANIPERNIQUA, Captain, POCO BODY, Braffo, and ECHALMINA, PARDINA, and ESENPRE, Chiefs of the District JUMOREE, situate on the Gold Coast of Africa; bounding on the *East* to the Districts of ABRINPIQUE (Abrimpique) and ABOAMA; on the *North* to QUITTRY and AFFINBA on the *West* to the lands of SUMANEE, (FUMANEE) and Affere; and on the *South* to the sea; both for ourselves and for our brothers, all the other chiefs, representing the whole community, here at present assembled.

Make known to all who shall see or hear read these, that whereas from olden and immemorial times, we and our country have always been vassals and subjects of the King of Portugal, in consequence thereof, doing such homage to His Governor residing at the Castle St. Jorge Del Mina, as good and faithful vassals are bound and ought to do: wherefore also the supreme overlordship of this country was belonging to the same King, so that if we fell into disturbances with our neighbours the same Governor has always maintained and protected us, like as, among many others besides, at the time of Don Francisco de Sotte Mayer was Governor at the aforesaid Castle, and we had fallen into war with those of ABOUMA, he has assisted us with soldiers and inhabitants, under the command of the captain of the Fortress at AXEM, named Manuel Couree. And as the aforesaid castle and Fortress at Axem, some years ago were 'occupied' by the arms of their High Mightinesses the Lords States General of the United Netherlands and the General Chartered West India Company, and consequently the right of the supreme overlordship of this country belongs to them, as the same resorts under the aforesaid Castle, and Fortress.

So is it that the Hon. Mr Johan Valckenbergh, at that time Fiscal over the North Coast of Africa, in the name and on behalf of the Hon. Director General Ruychaver, in the year of our Lord 1652, having betaken himself, together with some chiefs of AXEM, to these lands, we have renewed and confirmed at his hand the oath of fidelity and vassalage to the aforesaid Their High Mightinesses and the General Chartered West India Company, according to the manner of the country.

Since which time, have betaken themselves to us here, some evil men who, by wrongful ways, have caused us to transgress and to grant to the SWEDES places in other to drive trade, whom, because of the oath taken, we cannot now turn out, but we are not allowing them in these lands except to do their trade, without granting or having granted any right to the supreme Overlordship of these lands.

Wherefore having considered into what we have fallen, as tending directly to the ruin and fall of our lands, we have deputed our envoys to the Fortress Axem, to the Factor there, with the earnest request and prayer that he would be pleased to persuade the Hon. Mr Director-General Johan Valckenbergh, at present residing at the Castle St. Jorge del Myne, that he might send his envoys here in order to renew and confirm with us the ancient alliance and engagement, and to erect a fortress, in order that henceforth we may be the better, and inviolably, remain under our bounden obedience, and enjoy such protection as is due to the good and faithful vassals.

Whereupon we, the above named captain, Braffo, and chiefs, each having previously sent our hostages to del Mina and delivered them to the aforesaid Hon. Mr. Director General Valckenburgh for the assurance of our upright sincere meaning and intention, has ensured that the said Hon. Mr. Director General Valckenburgh has sent to us here, Adriaen Hogenhouck, Factor at the Fortress at AXEM, accompanied by INGURA, (Ingya), ATINBA (Amba, Amboe) AOCHE, and DONTOU, Chiefs, and Francisco NOU, interpreter, at Axem, whose hands (in the name and on behalf of the aforesaid Director General Valckenburgh) on this day we have renewed and confirmed the oath of allegiance to Their High Mightinesses the Lords States General of the United Provinces together with the General Chartered West India Company, promising now and at all times to comport ourselves as good and faithful vassals could or may be bound to do with their sovereigns. All of which aforesaid we promise we will keep inviolable and valid now and always; there under pledging our persons and goods, moveable and inmoveable, non excepted. Wherefore we have signed this with our hands in the market town ILONY, in the aforenamed district JUMORE, the 16th Day of January, in the year of our Lord 1657.

| | |
|---|---|
| This is the X Mark of MANIPERINJOU, Captain, | This is the X mark of POKOE BODY, Braffo, |
| This is the X Mark of ECHALMINA | This is the X mark of PARDINA |
| This is the X mark of ELIACUME | This is the X mark of ESEMPRE |

*Signed.* ADRIAEN HOGENHOUCK.

The date of the copy in Dorman is 10 January 1654, but the year 1657 in the documents seems to be correct.

# APPENDIX IV

## 'Act of Cession and Transfer of the SABOU Beach, of the Hill CONG and the appurtenances thereof, by the King and Chiefs of the District SABOU for the behoof of the Hon. General Chartered West India Company.'

[V.W.I.S. 1162, 313–16, O.W.I.C. 12]

WE, ABEEDOE INTIN, King, AMPA brother of the King, and ACOMANY ABEEDOE, AMANFIN Tiamy, Caboceros or Chiefs of the District ZABOU, situate in Africa on the coast of Guinea, make known to all who shall see hear read these Presents, that for a considerable period of years after the erection of the Fort Nassauw, disputes and great disturbances have many times arisen and grown between us and the Netherland Nation because of some possession, which they claimed had been granted and agreed to with them for our beaches (for the protection which they accorded to us against the violence of the Portuguese) to the exclusion of all other nations, but which we sustain the contrary, since about the building of Fort *Nassauw* we did not know that this was thought of; which disputes and differences through the long duration of time having continually become still worse, without we perceiving any means suitable for the removal thereof, so that the matters would finally come to break out into rupture with the aforesaid Netherlands Nation, entirely against our will; like as also was represented by their Director General Johan Valckenburgh on behalf of the aforesaid Nation, who endeavoured amicably to mediate, settle, and arrange the matters to the satisfaction of both sides. About which, then, divers meetings and conferences being appointed, everything was finally brought so far that it was mutually arranged and agreed, to the satisfaction of each, in that manner that we, both for ourselves and our successors, by these Presents, deliver and transfer into the hands of the aforesaid Johan Valckenburgh, Director General of the Netherlands Nation, for the behoof, profit, and general benefit of the High and Mighty Lords the States General of the United Netherlands and the General Chartered West India Company, the entire beach of our District, as that extends from the Fort Nassauw, Eastwards as far as to the FANTYNS territory, like as Westwards from the same fort to the *HILL CONG*, and from the aforesaid CONG still further Westwards as far as the jurisdiction of

FUTU, like as we hereby deliver and transfer the same, once and for all, and forever as aforesaid, without reserving to ourselves any right, action of claim, whereby we should hereafter be at liberty, or be empowered, or have authority to grant to any other Nation or peoples, any towns or places, in order to be able to do trade, or build houses, forts or lodges, nay, not even to come on shore, nor to be able to do anything that should be contrary hereto and come to encroach upon the right of the Netherlands West India Company, who shall be empowered to dispose in such a way against all and everyone, who should wish to prejudice them, therein, as against those who should wish to deprive them of that which they have possessed in inheritance for ever. In the which we faithfully promise always to assist and support them, for we absolutely abandon and renounce our right to the aforesaid beach and that which is appurtenant thereto, without by any deliberate or undeliberate means, reserving to ourselves anything to the prejudice of this Act of Cession and Transfer, nevertheless upon the condition and stipulation that, within the period of one year, there shall be commerced to be built, by the said Netherlands Director General, upon the Hill CONG, a fortification suitable to use four field guns upon it provided, moreover, that he shall, for this benefit pay and allow to us once for all, a sum of *fifteen Bendas gold*; which we, upon the delivery of our hostages for the fulfilment of the aforesaid, hereby acknowledge duly to have received to our contentment and satisfaction, and thus have nothing in the least further to claim thereupon, or shall hereafter claim, or cause to be claimed in our behalf, by any ways or means.

In witness whereof we have signed this with our hands on the 21 day of March, 1657 in the town Zabouw.

| | |
|---|---|
| This is the Mark X of the AMANFIN Tiamy. | This is the mark X of the King of Saboe, placed himself. |
| This is the X mark of INCOMMODAY Tiamy, placed himself | This is the X mark of AMPE placed himself. |

Hendrick Cock Upper Factor, Anthony van Hardenbergh, Upper Factor, and Cornelis Lichthardt Assistant at Mouree, in the service of the General Chartered W.I.C., declare testify and attest, in place of solemn oath which they are at all times if requested prepared to take and swear, how truly all that which is contained and inserted in the above standing Act of Cession and Transfer was done and passed in our presence, and indeed specially and particularly that the aforesaid writing, at the request of those by whom it is signed, we pertinently interpreted and represented to them as it is drawn up, before the signing thereof which they stated to be in accordance with their meaning and to be their own will. In witness whereof they have signed the same in our presence, like as we do this, for confirmation

of the truth that everything passed in that manner, in our presence on the 21st day of March, 1657, at the market town Zabou.[1]

Sgd. J. VALCKENBURCH,

Sgd. HEN. COCK
ANTHONY VAN HARDENBERGH
CORNELIS LICHTHARDT.

[1]O.W.I.C. 12
V.W.I.S. 1162, 313–16.

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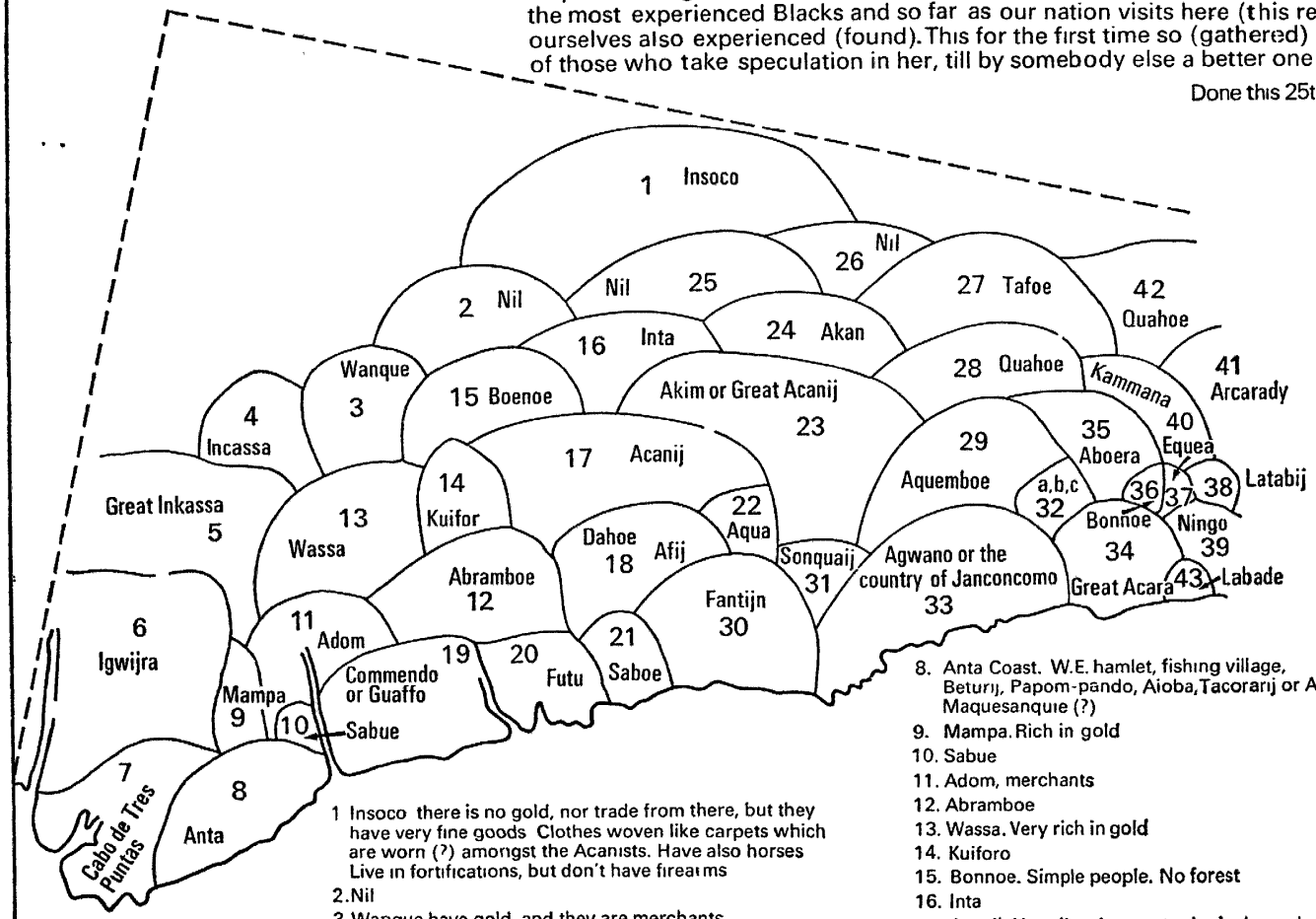
# 1. Map of the Gold Coast 1629

Map of the Regions of the G.C. in Guinea as we have enquired on various places on these coasts from the most experienced Blacks and so far as our nation visits here (this region) ordinarily and have ourselves also experienced (found). This for the first time so (gathered) brought together in the interest of those who take speculation in her, till by somebody else a better one will be done.

Done this 25th December 1629 in Guinea at Moure




1 Insoco there is no gold, nor trade from there, but they have very fine goods Clothes woven like carpets which are worn (?) amongst the Acanists. Have also horses Live in fortifications, but don't have firearms

2. Nil

3. Wanque have gold, and they are merchants

4. Incassa Igwijra

5. Great Inkassa

6. Igwijra. Rich in gold

7 Cabo de Tres Puntas

8. Anta Coast. W.E. hamlet, fishing village, Beturij, Papom-pando, Aioba, Tacorarij or Anta, Maquesanque (?)

9. Mampa. Rich in gold

10. Sabue

11. Adom, merchants

12. Abramboe

13. Wassa. Very rich in gold

14. Kuiforo

15. Bonnoe. Simple people. No forest

16. Inta

17. Acanij. Here live the most principal merchants who trade gold with us

18 Atij

19. Commendo or Guaffo. Coast, W.E. Cocoberij, Aborbij, good fishing village, Aytaque or Little Commendo, Ampea, salt village, Minjna

20. Futu Coast, W.E. hamlet, saltvillage, Cabocors

21. Saboe. Coast, W.E. saltvillage Moure, saltvillages

22 Aqua

23 Akim or Great Acanij. Very delicate people, and rich in slaves

24. Akan

25. Nil

26. Nil

27. Tafoe. Rich in gold

28. Quahoe. Rascal people

29. Aquemboe. Thievish people

30. Fantijn. Coast, W E Iron bush, Don Pedro's village, saltvillage, Anamabo, Planters village, Potters cachalot saltvillage, Cormantijn, Mijna-fishers, Rio Amijsa, saltvillages, Mijna fishers, Rio Indaco, saltvillage, saltvillages

31. Sonquaij

32. A,B,C, the market of Acara

33. Agwano or the country of Janconcomo; very prone to war Coast, W E. savage corner, (rough cape), Mijna fishers, Polderbay, Devil's Mountain, New Bijamba, Old Bijam Bijamba, Barcu, Jaco, Cox, broot, Little Barcu

34. Great Acara (Coast W.E. Socho, Momborijbij, Acara, Orsou)

35 Aboera. Has gold

36. Boenoe

37 Equea

38. Latabij

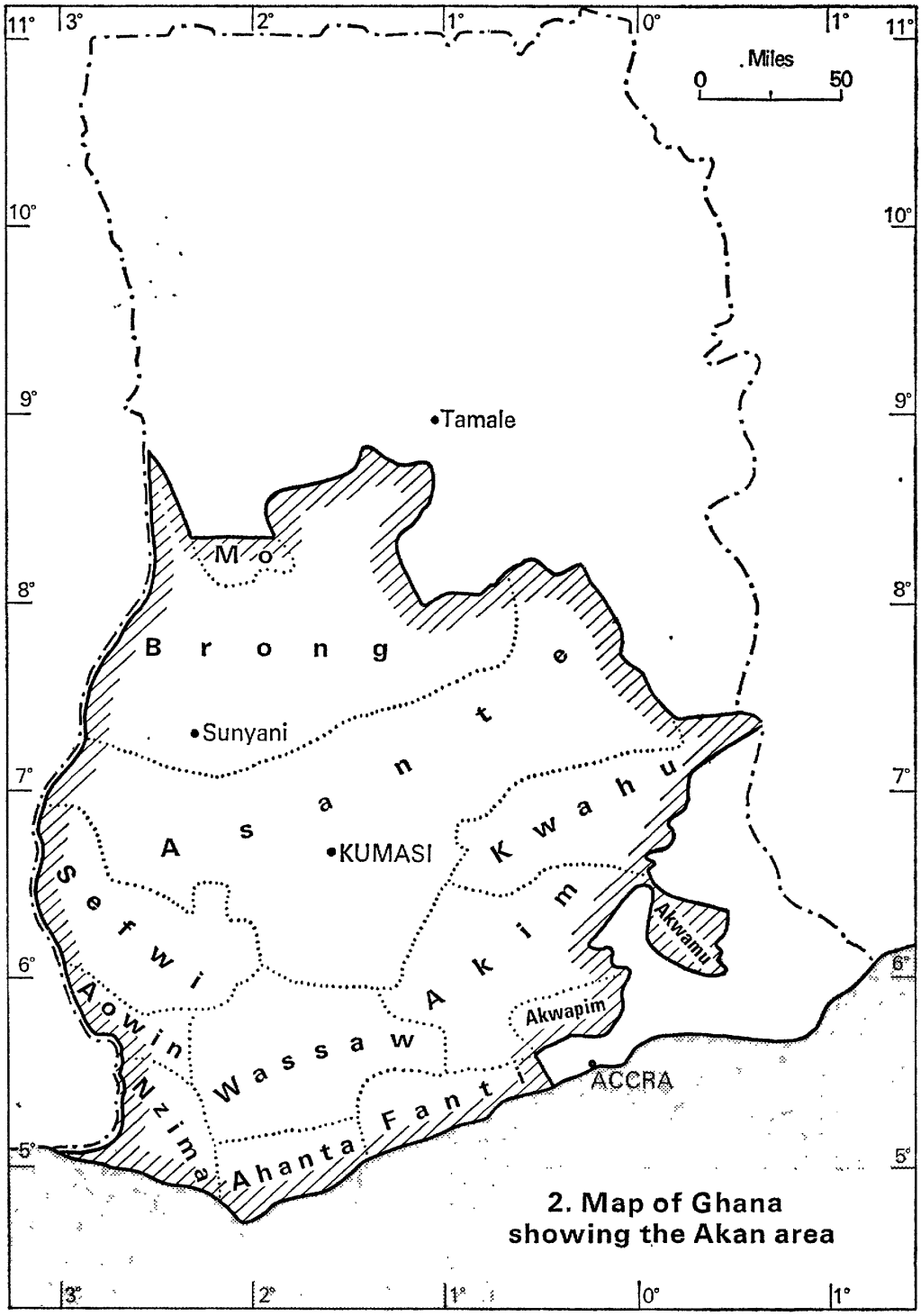
39 Ningo

40. Kammana

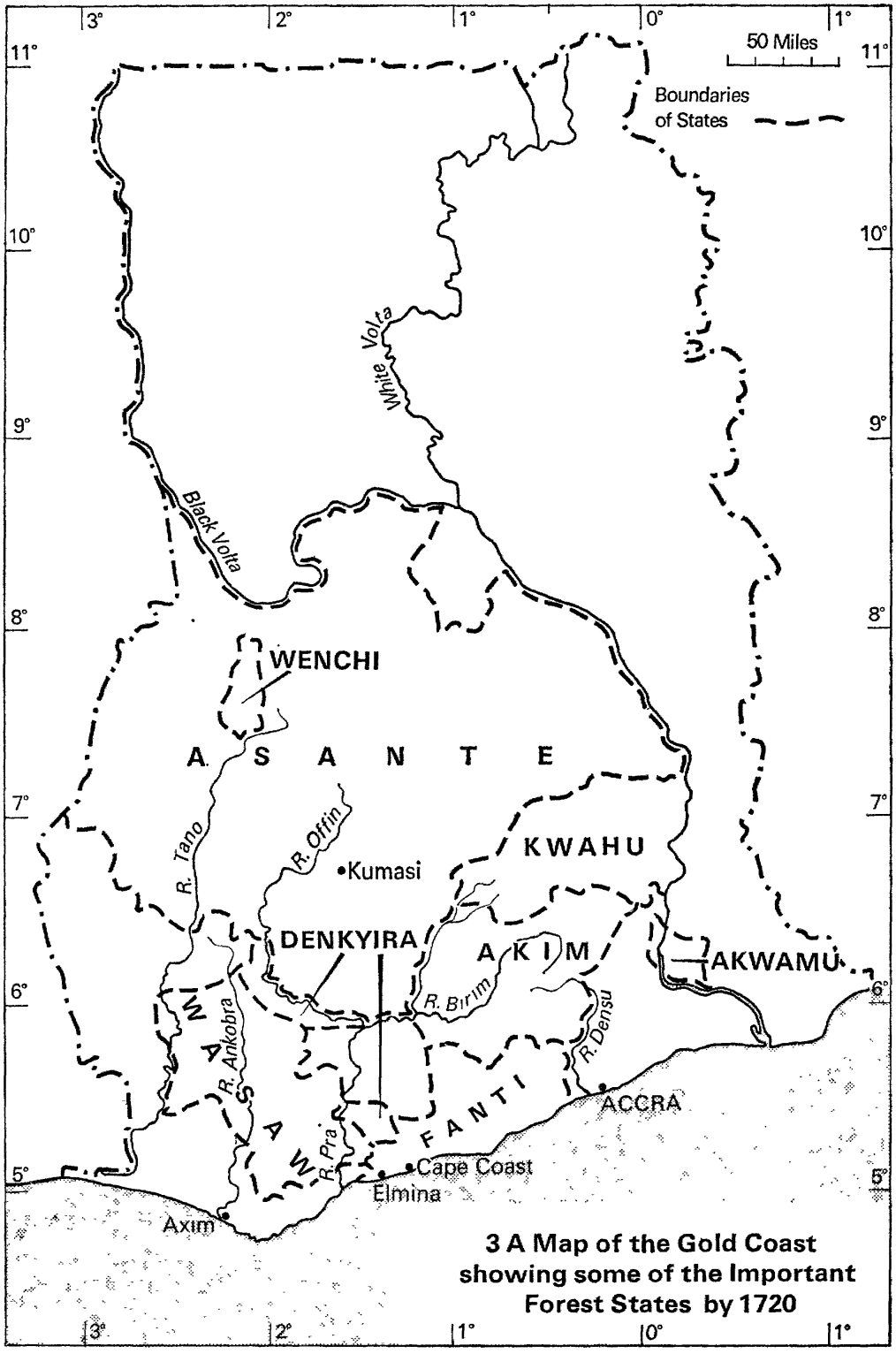
41. Arcarady. Much gold

42. Quahoe. Rich in gold

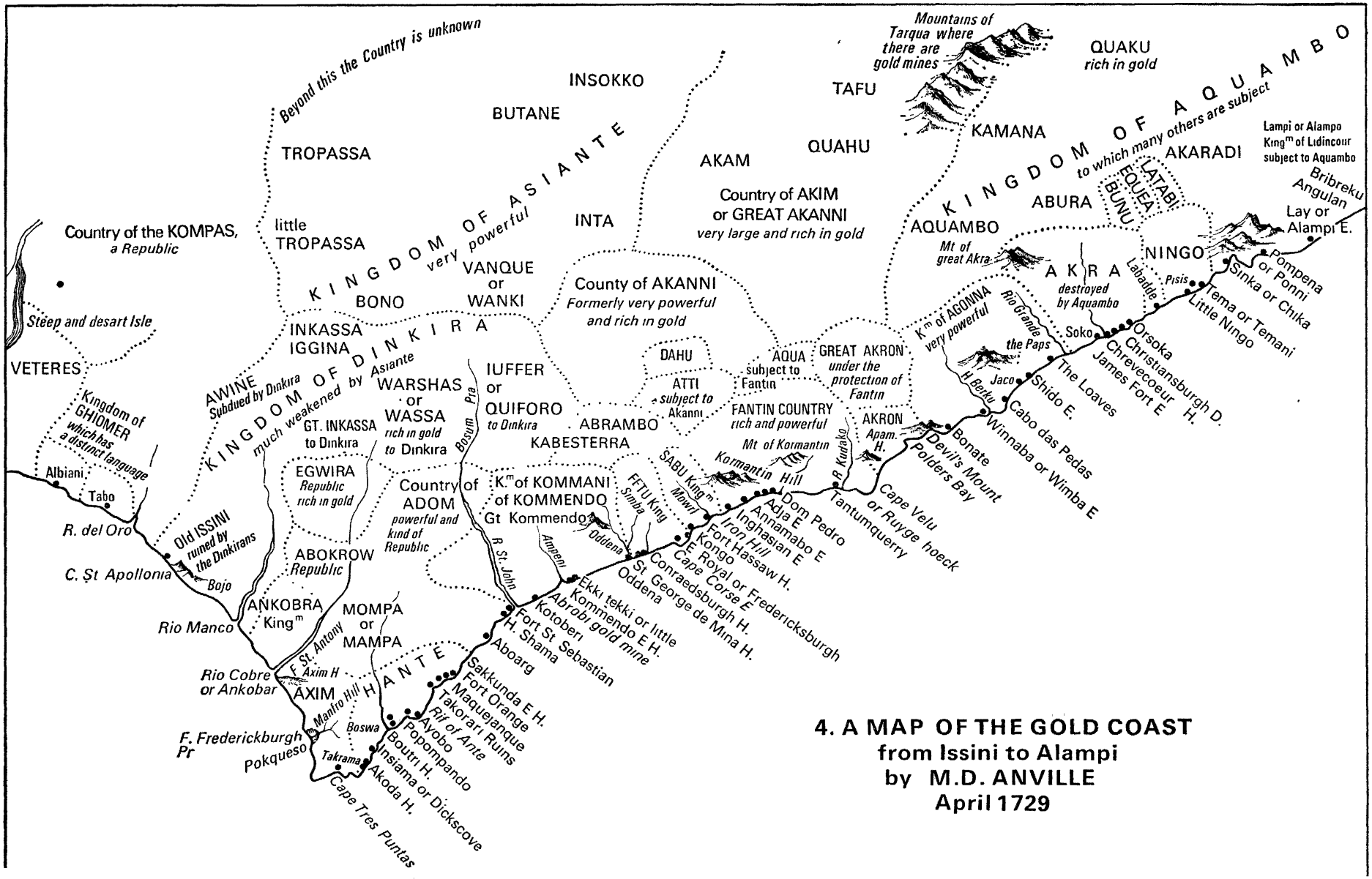
43 Labade




**2. Map of Ghana showing the Akan area**




**3 A Map of the Gold Coast showing some of the Important Forest States by 1720**




**4. A MAP OF THE GOLD COAST**
**from Issini to Alampi**
**by M.D. ANVILLE**
**April 1729**

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